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The Eternal Feminine

Photo by Aimé Dupont, N. Y.

MAY ISABEL FISK

THE ETERNAL FEMININE

MONOLOGUES

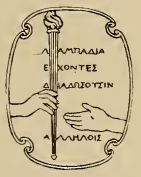
BY

MAY ISABEL FISK

AUTHOR OF

"THE TALKING WOMAN"

AND OTHER MONOLOGUES



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BOOKS BY

MAY ISABEL FISK

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At the Beauty Parlors

At the Beauty Parlors

SCENE: *The "beauty parlors" of a large department store. There are a number of booths divided off by wooden partitions, whence emanate swashing and gurgling sounds—indicating the progress of the shampoo — the whir of the electric hair-dryer, the metallic click of curling-irons, and the delicate spat-spat of massage. Young women with voluminious coiffures and bared arms and wearing small aprons, dart in and out of these booths, much perturbed, shrilly demanding towels, hunting for brushes and combs, etc. It would seem that most of the articles desired have been*

mislaid or appropriated by other than their rightful possessors, for various comment and much loud protest concerning the matter are forthcoming.

It is an exceedingly busy hour. The "parlors" are situated in close proximity to the restaurant, and mingled with "One chicken salad," "Two ham sandwiches, thin," is, "Three shell hair-pins, short and thick." The rattle of the dishes adds materially to the general confusion, but is almost dominated by the shriek of a phonograph in the adjoining musical-instrument department. At one of the manicure tables, near the desk of the young woman who keeps a supervising eye on all, is the nail operator about to commence ministrations on a newly arrived customer.

ALL right, madam, you don't have to tell me you're in a hurry—they all do. . . . Oh, I don't mean but what you're not, but they all say the same thing—have to catch a train, or meet their husbands, or got an engagement at the dressmaker's, or see a lady at lunch—

. . . Of course I believe you. I'm just telling you what they all say. It don't make no difference to us girls—we have to do our work just the same.—Round or pointed, long or short? . . . I always ask so there won't be no trouble, later. Some customers get so mad if they ain't

to suit 'em, and after they're off you can't put 'em on again. . . . All right. I have a cousin who's like that, too. She hates them long. She's all for the social whirl, as they say. She says they catch in the fringe on her table-cloths when she's washing 'em.

. . . That's Caruso singing now. I have a friend and she's just crazy about him. She waits at the stage door to see him come out, and once she saw him driving in the Park. . . . No, he was driving—she was on a bench. She gets all her friends to cut the pieces out of the papers about him, and she puts them on the wall. She went to the matinee last Sat'day—she got a grand seat up in the top gallery and only paid a dollar for it. She thinks he noticed her, for when he put his hand on his heart — to sing, you

know—and looked up he had such a queer look. Oh, she's just crazy about him.

When she was telling us about it last Sunday afternoon, my little sister said most likely he had a pain! She's a caution, that kid.

Oh, she's terrible—she teases me terrible, too. Whenever one of my gentlemen friends is calling on me she acts awful—runs right in and makes faces and carries on something fierce. My mother can't do nothing with her, and my father's so foolish about her he lets her go on just the way she wants.

. . . Is that too short? Just say the word. The Western gentlemen are all for long nails—just as long as you can get 'em. There was one in here the other day while his wife was down in the

umbrellas. He was a lovely gentleman, too. You ought to have seen his diamonds—a great big one on each pinky, and a great big one in his collar-button—

. . . What? Oh yes, he had it so it showed lovely, and the handsomest scarf-pin you ever saw—a galloping horse with a ruby tail and standing on a whip—all of diamonds. He said it cost five hundred dollars—but that wasn't nothing to him. He must have had all kinds. He said I ought to go out to Denver—that's where he's from. He said he would introduce me to some of the swellest young gentlemen there. He says that money is the only thing that counts out his way, and the girl who can pick up a rich husband—and there are plenty of 'em—is just as good as the next one.

Not but what I think I'm just as good

as anybody going, now. I'd like to have some one tell me I wasn't.

. . . But I do get sick and tired of this slaving once in a while, and when you've got ambitions and want to get ahead, all you can do is to— Just put them in the bowl and let them soak—and leave them dry up! And when you want a little society life it's an everlasting scrimp for clothes.

. . . No, I can't. . . . Well, I'm busy, too. Can't you wait on her, Miss Finnegan? I've just started to soak this lady, and she's going to be waved and steamed after. I was late to lunch yesterday, and I'm not going to be late again to-day—it's awful the way us girls is overworked!

. . . See that big blond lady just come in? She's the leading lady in the chorus of a big burlesque company. She gets

an awful big salary—she told me so herself. You wouldn't think not a bit of that head was her own, would you? I made her a lovely rat to order—big in the middle and just tapering at each end—it was my own idea. She was sick and tired of ordinary rats—and she'd had all kinds. She said this one didn't seem to scratch nor tickle a bit—you see, not having much hair, her skin feels as though it was right on top of her head. She always goes in an automobile—probably there's one waiting for her downstairs now. She's awful good to her mother, too. Half the lies they tell about her ain't so. And she's so refined. She has champagne for lunch every day. My married sister knows a lady who knows a lady who used to wash her windows, and she told her.

"YOU WOULDN'T THINK NOT A BIT OF THAT HEAD WAS HER OWN, WOULD YOU?"

She goes out to supper after the show every night to the very swellest places—and she never eats nothing commoner than lobster or terrapin—I heard that, too, for a fact. She's one of my regular customers. She'll feel terrible if I can't wait on her this morning. She gave me a pass for the theater one night, and I went with one of my gentlemen friends.

We went behind the stage afterward. It was awful exciting, but I was terrible disappointed, too. The back of the scenery doesn't look like the front at all—you haven't any idea. You see, there was a garden scene in the—other hand, please—last act, and you would think when the villain comes in from throwing the hero off the cliff and murdering the child, and has come back to say farewell

to his aged mother, well, you'd think when he goes through the door in the cottage he was walking right into the room. But it ain't that way at all—nothing but ropes and canvas and men standing around in their shirt-sleeves.

And I wish you could have seen what was that awful thunderstorm in the second act—I never was so disappointed. Nothing but a sheet of iron hung up in the middle with handles at the bottom to shake at both sides!

And where the comedian falls downstairs and you nearly die laughing and think all his bones is broke; well, it's nothing but a big box of broken glass shook around! . . . I was saying to my friend how bad all the things looked near to, and there he was staring at those brazen huzzies in short clothes, and he

said he thought some of the things looked pretty good to him near to!

You can imagine how mad I was—I just hustled him right out, and we never waited to see her. We made her five switches, too.

. . . Say, Ella—come here a minute—that's a good girl. Say, listen here. If any one calls me on the 'phone—you know who I mean—tell him I'll be at the drug-store on the corner at half past seven sharp, will you? I'll do as much for you some day. I was going to ask Maggie, but she's so dumb she never knows nothing. . . . All right. Tell him I'll be there on time if I have to chuck up my job.

—Other hand, please. . . . Oh, just some kind of a sociable. The minister is going to give an address. It does

seem queer to have a minister talk where folks expect to enjoy themselves, don't it?

Ouch! how my foot hurts! I'm trying to break in these shoes to wear to-night—I don't think anything is so swell as patent leather with white foxed kid tops, do you? I never can get them on, though, till I've worn them for several days.

Oh, good morning, Mrs. Romaine. . . . No, I'll be busy for some time—this lady's nails is awful obstinate. . . . Yes, ain't it a shame? . . . I'm sorry, too. Can't you come in to-morrow? I can attend to you then. . . . All right—good-by. How's the baby? . . . That's good.

. . . Did you notice she was in mourning? . . . It's her sister—she had an operation, and although she died, the doctor said

they could have the satisfaction of knowing the operation was a great success and she died perfectly well. They think he's the grandest thing ever since. But I'm scared to death of those things—I'd rather be a coward and stay half sick all the time than be dead for the rest of my life. You never need your health so much as when you're sick and ain't got it.

I had the ammonia myself last winter. It come on awful sudden. I fainted one day, and the first thing I knew I didn't know nothing at all, and when I did I wasn't any better. I suffered awful. They say consumption is a very pleasant disease—you don't have any pain and everybody waits on you. I'd rather be took gradual that way, too.

That lady with her sister's operation—she was awful mad about her clothes.

She'd got lovely things to wear to Palm Beach, but she says there's no use to go there and sit around all black—you can't have a good time—not that she wanted a good time, of course, but she thinks if they had delayed the operation till spring—as long as it had to turn out this way—it would have been pleasanter all around for everybody, and her sister wouldn't have minded waiting.

See that lady over there, just come in? . . . She doesn't look queer, does she?—just like any one else, for all you could tell. Well, she writes books—a book, anyway. She gave me one and it had wrote in the inside, "Compliments of the author." I loaned it to our floor-walker to read, but he said it didn't seem to be nothing but words. He's terrible smart—he reads all the books that's wrote.

. . . No, I haven't read it myself. It's called "Sought and Unsought—Nature's Wonder." . . . No, you couldn't get much idea from that. But I guess that's the way with the best books—they make them so you can't find out what they're talking about too easy.

You wouldn't think she'd have so much of her mind on her looks, neither, but let me tell you, when I'm shampooing her if I get a little water down her neck she makes as much fuss as the next one.

. . . Oh yes, we do massaging, too. We've got a wonderful soap—it would take that chin of yours right off. If my little sister could see you she would make so much fun of you it would set you crazy.

Your hair needs touching up, too, around the edges. They do it lovely here. I wished you could see the lady

who was in here the other day. She looked a great deal worse than you do, and I wished you could have saw her when we all got through with her. She was kind of worn out, though. Her own family wouldn't have known her. She said she was coming in again this week, but she hasn't come—I don't know why. You know you look something like her, and at first I thought it might be her when you first come in. . . . We have a grand hair tonic, too. One lady I recommended it to, and it made her hair quit in half a bottle.

. . . No, I can't, Miss Molloy—I haven't near finished this lady, and I'm going to my lunch on time to-day, and I don't care who knows it. . . . They think just because a girl works for her living she hasn't got any rights.

. . . Miss Reilly, haven't you done that lady in blue yet? . . . What? . . . She's still dripping? Well, what's the matter with your dryer? . . . Broke again? Ain't that the luck! What about that brown lady, is she still wet, too? . . . Oh dear!

One of the shampoo girls is home sick—you remember that tall one? . . . Yes, and that makes us short. . . . Her? Oh no, she wouldn't do nothing if we was all to drop dead in our tracks. She's awful stuck up—she's got engaged now, and she thinks she's too good to speak to nobody.

Quick! See that black lady going out? . . . We skinned her last month—doesn't she look white? She's got lots of money, and she's going to marry a young man who is in the same class with her son at college. Terrible, ain't it?

One of our girls got married last week, too. That upsets us. She's going to bring her husband in to show us when they get back.

They've gone to Niagara Falls—one of those excursions. She had her choice of an imitation sealskin coat or the trip, and she said the coat would wear out some day, no matter how careful she was, and the Falls would last as long as she lived. . . . They had their pictures taken on a post-card with the Falls back of them, sitting on a wicker bench, holding hands, with a marble pillow with a plant on it on one side and a foot-stool in front.

They have a lovely flat—one of those with a long hall and all the rooms on one side except the middle one, which is across. They're going to rent most of them. She got lovely presents. Her

married sister gave her a real cut-glass mirror. It had been one of her own wedding-presents—her husband is dead—he was massacred out in China during the Spanish War, I think. She's got one little boy. . . . Yes, it was one of her wedding-presents.

. . . Did I say so? . . . Yes, of course the mirror, I meant. He's a little terror—she's going to have an awful lot of trouble with him.

I really think the parents who don't have any children are happier in the end—though it is lovely to have them the way they do now—all bows and things. My oldest sister just had a christening party for her third. I said *she* did, though, of course, it was my brother-in-law's, too—but if you could have seen him! It was terrible—my sister was so

mortified—he acts awful when he's that way. He did the same thing when they christened their last one—started right out in the morning to celebrate, and by night when they all began to come—he was awful. She said this was the last one she'd ever have. . . . No, last christening.

There you are—don't they look grand? You got lovely nails. You ought to come in every week regular and let me do them for you.

All right—just a minute. I want to show you our new Dew-Drop cream. There isn't anything it won't do to your skin if you only keep it up long enough. There was a lady in here the other day—she bought a dozen boxes. Her husband said she looked so different after she used it he didn't know what to make

of it. This Liquid Pink Perla is fine, too. Don't smear a bit and never shows in the daytime. . . . Oh, you prefer the dry kind? Well, here's one of our own make we guarantee. . . . You don't want it? . . . All right. Good-by. Be sure to ask for me next time you come in—here's my card. You can pay me or at the desk—just as you like.

. . . Well, what do you think of that, Ella—slaving like a dog for the last half-hour and not a darn tip!

Overheard at the Academy

Overheard at the Academy

MY dear, I'm *so* sorry—have you been waiting long? . . . Not really? Isn't it a shame! But you know I simply couldn't remember whether you said be here at half after two or half after three, and I thought if I got here at two-thirty and you weren't waiting I would surely think you weren't coming at all, so if I got here at *three*-thirty there couldn't be a mistake. Besides, that just gave me two minutes to pop in and have my new foulard tried on. My dear, Juliette is a beast—first she

kept me waiting fifteen minutes and then I was one solid half-hour standing while she fitted me. But I knew you wouldn't be cross, for you are just the one woman I know who never gets disagreeable if you are kept waiting a few moments.

Now Edith dear, I'm going to pay for the tickets. . . . Well, I want to—I shall be so hurt if you don't let me. . . . All right, dear, if that is the way you feel about it. I suppose we do need a catalogue—I certainly *will* pay for that—you must let me. Oh dear—isn't that too stupid! I have put my purse in my skirt pocket and I can't get at it without a little exhibition of my own. Thank you so much—you must remind me to pay you back the moment we get out of here. . . . Oh, I insist—I positively insist. . . . All right, dear, if you are going to be of-

fended about it I sha'n't say another word.

Heavens—these stairs—they're awful in these new skirts. By the time I get the front foot forward, the hind leg—I don't know any other way to put it—is bursting out the back seam. Here we are at last. I *am* out of breath.

Where shall we begin? At the front end and work toward the big numbers, or backward and go frontward--you know what I mean. I usually begin in one corner, look all the way around without raising my eyes, then I go to the middle and look up and down, up and down, in rows—you understand—and in that way I don't miss anything. I made up this method when I was doing the picture-galleries on the Continent—I got so I could do any picture-gallery—no matter

how big it was—in an hour. I'm awfully keen on art.

You would? . . . Oh, you wouldn't? . . . Oh, you would? . . . All right. I think we had better begin by sitting down to rest. I stood so long at that hateful Juliette's my feet are nearly dead. Besides, I have new shoes on, and although they simply don't touch me—I always get them at least two sizes too large—I could swim in them, I assure you—still we might sit down for a few moments.

What a relief! My dear, you did sit down with a bounce—I believe you are getting stouter. . . . No, no, don't be silly —I really didn't mean what you think I meant—I didn't mean you were *really* getting stouter—you just look as though you were. . . . Now, Edith, that isn't kind of you to misunderstand like that.

I'm really mad about art—I think, dear, I'll just slip off my shoes—I can kick them under this bench—only for a moment—and you trot about and tell me if there is anything worth looking at. The thing, after all, is to really have been here, isn't it? So few understand the true message Art has for us, anyway. It thrills me right to the bone.

What's that? Sixty-eight, "Meditation." What a curious idea—a donkey looking over the fence into that field of carrots! . . . That *is* right, my dear, that *is* right—I looked at the number. . . . Well, I can't go over—without my shoes—you look.

Oh, it's that girl sitting under a tree with a book? Now, really, wouldn't you think they would arrange the pictures so you couldn't make a mistake like that?

Nobody seems to know their business nowadays.

Now you look all over the other side of the room and I will look here—I can see everything, sitting—then you come back and describe the pictures to me, and if you think it worth while I will go over and look, too. . . . You had better leave the catalogue—unless, of course, you would like it. If you would, I will go straight down-stairs and get another if you say the word. Are you perfectly sure? . . . You are? . . . All right, then I will keep it, for there is no earthly use trying to make out what these things are without a catalogue.

. . . Back so soon? . . . No, I haven't looked at anything yet—I have just been sitting here with my eyes closed trying to think of the exact shade I want for

the drawing-room paper. I want it all done over—that is— Well, my dear, you never hear me utter a complaint—but there are certain persons in my house—or *his* house, as he is always reminding me—who might be a little more generous with their money. Although, as you know, nothing would make me say one word against William, not one word, but when a man begins to make a woman feel that every penny he spends— Well, I am not going to say a word. And particularly when a new paper would be precisely as much for his benefit as mine—And then throwing the new piano in my face every few moments—and a measly little upright one at that, when I wanted one of those square ones with photographs all over the top and a good bit of drapery hanging down. Let me tell you

I have my troubles, although I never breathe them to any one—which is more than most women would do with all I have to put up with—but then, never mind. I shall keep my mouth closed no matter what any one else would do under the circumstances.

Do go over and see what that pink-and-yellow mess is in the corner. . . . "Autumn Twilight"? Isn't that ridiculous! Who is it by? . . . Oh, indeed, is it? Well, of course when you begin to study it closely you see there is something in it. Quite a beautiful bit, after all. You know you should really look at the painter's name first—it helps you with your criticisms. But of course I love Art for Art's sake—I sometimes wish I had gone in for a career of that sort. I once took a course of ten lessons and I

really turned out some rather remarkable things. Not from the nude, you know, or anything vulgar like that, but a very refined little scene—a ship in a storm, with the rain coming down in torrents—and sheep in the foreground—on the beach, you understand—one black. You could almost hear the rain coming down and you could see the drops way across the room—just as natural—and you could tell the sheep were eating the grass. My teacher said she had never seen anything like it!

Do you know, I think this year's Exhibition is even worse than last, don't you? There seems to be a general decline in Modern Art.

. . . Yes, I suppose we had better move on. I have been fishing around with my foot for my shoe, and I can't seem

to find it. Would you mind just getting down and looking under? Ask that woman to move, will you?—maybe she's sitting over it. . . . But it must be; I haven't moved off this bench since we came in here. It must be there—get farther under. . . . You're sure?— Oh, my dear, how dirty you've gotten! what a pity! You know I really didn't want you—. . . Where can it be?

There, what's that horrid little boy got in his hand? Run after him, quick, Edith—it's my shoe. . . . Thank you so much—the little wretch—children are so badly brought up, nowadays.

I *am tired*—picture-galleries are the most tiring things in the world. But then I believe in doing everything conscientiously when you are about it. If

you don't mind I think I will sit down again while you look about.

And just see the way they have these pictures jumbled up—no idea or order in the arranging. If they would have some rule about it. Now a good plan would be to have, say, all the "After the Storm" pictures in a row and then on top of that all the "Old Garden's." Or better still, I would put a row of small ones and then the next size on top of that and so on. Evidently no one has considered an idea of this kind.

Now, that portrait of a horse is good —what a lot of atmosphere he has in him! But I don't care for that cabbage-field next to him. . . . Oh, I think it is, but it is really never safe to decide what it is without consulting the catalogue. . . . Oh, "A Battle-Field"! Why, they are

not cabbages, but heads! You see, I was right—it's never safe to say anything till you look it up. Well, you know, "What is one man's Art is another man's poison."

Do you know, dear, if you don't mind I think I will run along. I have enjoyed it so much, but I think I have probably seen everything worth while—and I don't think much of that. I must have a cup of tea. I would ask you to come with me, but I know you would rather keep on looking. Really, when you have seen one picture you have seen them all, for when you come down to it, there can't be so much difference in them, for when you analyze it—it's only paint and canvas, after all, isn't it? Good-by—I have enjoyed myself. Good-by.

Photographing the Baby

Photographing the Baby

SCENE: *The nursery. A small, unattractive-looking child is screaming and roaring in apparent terrified rage, amid a riot of broken toys on the floor. Grandmother, maiden aunt, father, mother, and a submerged and helpless nurse are grouped about, standing and kneeling, endeavoring, with unvarying ill success, to coax the infant into good nature and holiday garb. The mother, somewhat more determined than the rest, is dangling a clean white dress in one hand, and with the other she waves a maddening arrangement of bells and rattle, the sight of which seems to further infuriate the child.*

NOW, muzzer's angel must come and get dressed again. Edward, I think if you hold his feet, while grandma nips his hands and Aunt Ella steadies his head, we can get him into it—Maggie, you shake the bells as loud as you can to distract him, and then he won't notice what we are doing to him. I know this way isn't according to the instructions in the book, but he doesn't seem to respond to science this morning.

. . . I cannot understand his antipathy to clothes. . . . Now, Edward, that remark was entirely unnecessary, and when you

know my nerves are already worn to a bone. You men are always saying the hatefulest things about the means we use to make ourselves look nice, but if we don't look well then you don't notice us. . . . Not at all; you men are quite as deceitful in your way, for when a man is trying to get a girl engaged to him he pretends he possesses all the loveliest traits of character, and then, when you *do* marry him, you find out he is quite different from what you thought. And if that isn't deception, *criminal* deception, I don't know what you call it! . . . Now, grandma, don't you interfere—Edward is quite capable of taking care of himself.

Now does it seem possible anything so small could scream so loud and be so determined? It does seem to me, with all of us here trying our best to amuse

him, he might be in a better temper. I do hope, Edward, he is not going to inherit your disposition. . . . Now, grandma, that's not so at all—I'm not fault-finding. But you and Ella always side with Edward—no one ever agrees with me, no matter what I say— . . . Well, never mind, we won't discuss it now, and I don't want baby to see anything like dissension in the family—the book says anything of the kind is bad for him, the atmosphere must always be pleasant around him. . . . Well, I didn't begin it. . . . I certainly did not.

Well, are we going to get this dress on him or are we not? This is the last clean one he has. I do think, Maggie, when Mr. Tripp gave him his fountain-pen to play with, you might have seen he didn't pull the bung thing out of it and let the

ink all over him—particularly when you know how fond he is of upsetting ink-bottles. I have an idea he may be going to be an author. And he's got that bread and jam all over his hair—it's taken every bit of curl out of it. You know he always rubs it on his head if you don't watch him. It does seem to me, with all I've studied up about him in *The Care of Infants*, that you people might be a little more careful of him when I'm not around!

There—that's the third time he's sneezed—I don't see how he can be taking cold in this hot room. . . . Why, Ella, why on earth did you let him have the pepper-pot to play with? . . . Well, suppose he did insist on having it—you shouldn't have done it. What is the use of my disciplining him if every time my back is turned he is allowed to do as he likes? I wouldn't

have let him have it, no matter how he went on. All the authorities say you must start in to be firm from the beginning, and stay so. . . . Oh, all right. . . . Good heavens, if he's going to scream like that let him keep it—Ella, give it back to him. But if you are all going to give in to him like that, all my work will go for nothing.

Ella, can't you hold your hand over his mouth for one moment while I hear myself think? . . . No, he won't, either—as long as you don't cover up his nose, too. . . . Well, don't, then—I want him to have a pleasant expression when he has his picture taken.

. . . Now, are we all ready? Maggie, are you sure we haven't forgotten anything? Count up and see—you know we have seven things to carry. . . . No,

grandma, I am not going to take any of his toys—he's getting quite big enough to understand, and I'm not. . . . Oh, if he's going to go on like that— . . . Yes, he can take his fire-engine, and his Teddy bear, and his soldiers— . . . No, he cannot take that great Punch-and-Judy show. Well, how on earth are we going to carry it? I suppose he's not going to stop crying till we do—we will have to take a cab now.

Maggie, you haven't forgotten to put his bottle in the bag? I suppose the man can heat it for us. . . . And the orange? . . . No, no, grandma, not the inside—of course—he just likes to lick it.

Here's Edward with the cab—oh, dear, why did he get one with a brown horse—you know baby hates anything but a white horse like the one on his wagon. Good-by, everybody.

. . . You see, just as I said. Every time I try to get in, Edward, he starts to scream. . . . Well, what is he going to look like for his picture with such a dreadful expression and his face all snarled up? You will have to get him another. No, Edward, it's no time to joke—white or cream-color—perhaps he wouldn't mind that.

. . . Of course the man is cross about it—pay him something and get rid of him. We're late for the appointment now. And don't give him too much, Edward; remember the coal bill isn't paid yet! It does seem as though Prosperity no sooner gives you something with one hand, than she gives you a kick with the other.

Oh, Edward, tell him to stop a moment—I want to look at those hats in that

window. . . . Now, isn't that sickening—an exact copy of mine and just half the price!

. . . Now, I do hope he isn't going to keep us waiting—baby is so disagreeable when he has to wait. Do you know, Edward, I think he grows more like you every day. . . . No, I didn't, Edward—I didn't mean anything of the kind—you are so quick to take me up on every little thing I say, and I should think when you know how nervous I am over baby's picture you wouldn't do everything in your power to irritate me. . . . Nothing of the kind—you're cross—I'm nervous—that's a very different thing. . . . I sha'n't discuss it.

(*They enter the photograph-gallery.*)

I do hope you aren't going to keep us waiting—the baby is very sensitive and

doesn't like to be kept waiting. He's a sweet-tempered boy, though. . . . Shake hands with the gentleman, dear. Put out your hand, darling— Oh no, sweetheart, mustn't slap—just put your hand out—he's shy. Perhaps if you would come a little closer. . . . There, now, darling— Oh, don't pull the gentleman's mustache—he's so full of fun, if you only understand it right— Why, he's *sticking* to you—where on earth did he get that candy? I believe Maggie gave it to him. . . . I'm so sorry—he didn't mean to —you can easily clean it off. . . . Yes, his little nails are sharp, too— . . . You have another appointment before us? . . . Oh yes, I know we're late. . . . All right—we'll sit here and wait.

It seems he has some one before us, Edward. . . . Well, I know we're late, but

I do think he needn't have let some one go before us. . . . You're late, too, for one of your business appointments? Well, telephone and say you have been delayed or something—say I have been taken suddenly ill and you can't leave me—but don't tell an untruth Edward; I hate that telling of small lies—it's inexcusable under any conditions. . . . Well, of course I suppose your business is important, but aren't baby's pictures important, too? Good heavens! here comes that horrid Kemp woman with that hateful little brat of a boy of hers! I wouldn't have had her see me here for anything—I hope she doesn't catch sight of me—there, she has. . . . Oh, good morning, Mrs. Kemp; isn't this nice to meet you? And your dear little boy, too—what a darling he is. What's your name, dear? . . .

Wainwright? My, what a big name for such a very little boy! . . . Why, no, Mrs. Kemp, I didn't mean he was undersized—that was just a silly little joke. . . . Come, Wainwright, come and speak to baby—that's a nice little man. . . . There, baby, shake hands with Wainwright; that's a good darling. . . . Oh, darling, don't slap. . . . Oh, I'm so sorry—I'm sure it wasn't baby's fault—he never slaps or does the least ill-natured thing—he has an angelic disposition—every one says so. I am sure if you had warned the boy it wouldn't have happened—baby is such a little gentleman, although he is so young. . . . There, Wainwright, don't scream so—baby didn't mean to hurt you—he only wanted to play. . . .It hurt just the same? But you're too big a boy to cry over a little thing like that. . . . No, Mrs. Kemp,

baby certainly did not hit him at all—it landed on a soft spot, that's all—on his head, I think—baby is never cross unless some one annoys him. . . . Oh, are they ready for us to go up now? . . . All right. . . . So pleased to have met you, Mrs. Kemp, and had this pleasant little chat.

I must apologize to you for not having returned your last call before this, but I've been so awfully busy with one thing and another, and Mr. Tripp had a cold, and—and—well, good morning; I am so glad to have seen you. Good-by, Wainwright.

Oh, Edward, wasn't that just like you —why didn't you say something and help me out? . . . What? Didn't want to interfere? Nonsense! I sometimes wonder if you really know how exasperating

you can be at times. . . . Don't say any more about it now.

Now ask the man to heat baby's bottle —he'll be cross if he doesn't get it—he's screwing up his face already. . . . He says he can't? Well, tell him he must. . . . Dear, dear, I suppose he will have to do without it, then. Now, he's begun to scream—there ought to be some way—I never heard of such disobliging people. We ought to have brought mother along, although I must say I know how to manage my own child, and don't thank any one, I don't care who it is, to give me any suggestions. There, now, muzzer's lamb mustn't cry any more and spoil his pretty face. Here's the orange—no, pet, no, mustn't try to bite it—only lick it. I should like to have him taken in his little shirt, but I think it is so embarrass-

ing for people after they have grown up and the family album is brought out for visitors and you are displayed with nothing on. It does seem to me his hair never stuck up quite so stiff and straight before—I don't dare brush it any more—his scalp is quite red already. Is the operator ready for us? I'm sure baby is going to take cold in that icy studio.

. . . Yes, this is the baby—he's such a handsome child I am sure you can't fail to get a good picture of him. . . . Oh no, I shouldn't care for him sitting like that with the book—you can see he's hardly old enough to read—that looks too ridiculous. . . . Oh no, he's too young to stand alone—he couldn't do that. . . . Oh no, he couldn't sit in a chair by himself for a moment. . . . No, I can't hold him, either—you see, I never thought about it,

and I simply can't go down to posterity in a last year's hat! Oh no, I couldn't do that under any consideration. . . . No, my husband couldn't hold him, either—I can't bear pictures of fathers holding their children—it looks as though you couldn't afford a nurse, or you were a suffragette. . . . Oh no, I shouldn't at all like him sitting on that table leaning against the palm—it seems such an un-child-like attitude. I don't know—Mr. Tripp might get under the table and steady his legs—if you have a cover and they wouldn't stick out. . . . You wouldn't do it, Edward? Well, I think that is very inconsiderate of you. I suppose we will have to risk the chair, then.

. . . Now, didn't I tell you he won't sit there a moment? . . . Shake something at him. . . . Oh no, I didn't mean anything

like that—something to amuse him—now you've only frightened him and he has begun to cry again. When he begins roaring with that peculiar sound at the beginning—you never know when he will stop—if you could only have heated his milk. . . . I know that—I suppose other people have not asked you—but that is no reason why I shouldn't. He's such a sweet-tempered child ordinarily, when he has his own way—but I never think of giving in to him under any circumstances. I think he has taken a dislike to you, and we will probably have trouble before we are through.

There, I knew it—he's fallen and bumped himself. Edward, I do think you might have watched him when I turned my back for one single second. . . . Now, don't say another word about

that old appointment of yours—I am nearly in hysterics myself. There, there, darling, do stop crying. Where are his toys? Edward, you left them in the cab—how could you be so thoughtless? . . . Well, it certainly was your fault—I suppose we will never get them back again. . . . And he's cried all over his clean dress and it looks like a rag.

There, now, if he will only stay still a minute— No, darling, don't turn your head away. . . . Look at mother, dear. No, no, dear—not at the man—you see you annoy him. I think it's your hair—not that there's anything strange about it—but baby isn't used to seeing hair stand up like yours. Now, look at mother, darling. See the birdie on mother's hat. . . . No, dear, not on the floor—hat—hat. . . . Look at mother's hat. . . . No, no,

"NO, MUSTN'T DO THAT WITH FATHER'S WATCH"

darling, don't put your foot in your mouth. . . . Why, no, Edward, it covers his face all up—we couldn't have it taken like that. And his eyes are just swollen out of his head with all this crying. . . . Let him take your watch and perhaps that will put him in a better humor. . . . There, now, see him smile—I always know what will please him. . . .No, darling, don't bang it about, dear. . . . No, mustn't do that with father's watch. Oh, darling—right on the floor! . . .

Well, Edward, you needn't blame me. How did I know he was going to slam it on the floor? And you see he's crying again because you won't let him have it back. I suppose it can be fixed—probably it needed repairing, anyway.

I think if the man got down on his hands and knees and played bear with

him for a while it might make him feel better. . . . What? You're too busy this morning? I should think— No, baby, sit still—mother is not going to take you up now—you must learn to mind what mother tells you—you're quite big enough, and when I say no, I mean no—all right, then, if you are going to cry again. There —that's a good expression—try to catch it— But he looks cross-eyed like that— . . . You had noticed he was cross-eyed? Edward, Edward, are you going to permit this man to say our child is cross-eyed? . . . What? You had noticed yourself he was slightly— All I can say is you are a most unnatural father— Never mind—

But you might try to take him sideways—my mother so often sits that way —it would look quite natural— Now,

darling, stay the way the man has put you— No, don't turn this way now. No, no, we want you looking the other way, now— Did you ever see anything so exasperating! . . . There's no use when he gets that obstinate look on his face—so like you, Edward—you can't do a thing with him. We will have to wait awhile now until he gets over it—I can't tell how long it will be—it takes him so long sometimes.

. . . You have to go to your lunch now? But you haven't taken a single picture yet— . . . It isn't your fault?—can't waste any more time? Edward, did you hear that? . . . You can't waste any more time, either? Disgusting—I shall tell the man down-stairs—and I shall take particular pains to tell all my friends how I have been treated in this place and just what

sort of people you are. Edward, look out of the way.

Come, muzzer's angel—we'll go straight home!

The Lady Help

The Lady Help

OOD MORNING, m'm. . . . Yes, m'm, I'm the lady you telephoned about to the registry office—a dreadful place for a lady—something I've never been used to—sitting about with persons like that—and you can see I am one and have always been one, though I do say it as perhaps I shouldn't. If my dear father was alive to see what I've gone through, he would be turning in his grave at this very minute—not that I would want him to. And just as I was leaving it to come here

a young woman made a disturbance, and they had to inject her out of the room. Such a shock to any one with the education and upbringing I have had—not that I ever burden any one with my troubles—I always try to be bright and cheerful and not worry any one, but it is hard when you have come down in the world as I have. If my poor father—and I wonder if you ever knew him? He was one of the best-known men near Bradford—he was the noted tripe-dresser of Siddersley—he was an artist in his line—everybody said so—so you can see what I came from. You might have seen his sign any day you liked coming up High Street—third turn on the left after passing Mrs. Malley's bake-shop, where you could always find her face looking out through the loaves of bread—with a blue

pig on it and two little ones, pink, playing about in the grass, which was blue—my father thought it was more elegant because different—we went in for style a great deal in those happy days. Ah, well, I'm the last one to talk about the injustices I have suffered from in this world, but if my poor father—

. . . N-n-o—not exactly married now—I was just coming to that. As I was about to say, I've always lived private before, and felt a registry office was quite beneath me with my refined feelings and education. In fact, my first husband used to tell me very often I was one of the most perfectly refined ladies he had ever met—and I never denied it. I was more of an ornament to him than anything else.

. . . . Yes, m'm, two—one dead, the

other—the second—at large. About him —it was one Sunday afternoon when I was down at Southend with a lady friend of mine, just for the afternoon to get a breath of fresh air. We'd had only a light luncheon and we was discussing whether we would have tea with a kipper or a pint of cockles—Mrs. Hobbles —that was her name—was all for tea, but I can't bear a cup of hot tea on a warm day, so I was for the cockles, so we decides on cockles, I being perfectly polite about it and wishing to please both. So we stops in front of a very nice stall and gets the cockles. And right then and there, m'm, as though it was fate I should have chose cockles, I meets my second husband. . . . Oh no, m'm, we wasn't married then—we hadn't met; but he asks me if I would care for

the salt, like a perfect gentleman—I could tell that at once, and then from one thing on we enters into a conversation, and then we all strolls on to the pier and there in the crowd we loses Mrs. Hobbles, and by the time we took the last train home at night we was both of the same mind—though different after—and in the spring we gets married.

Well, it never enters my head to make any inquiries about him, but I takes him as is, as he takes me, as is, and then I finds he has four boys and a girl in the country—him turning out to be a widower and me not knowing it, being of a trusting disposition as I says, and asking no questions and giving no answers —give and take has always been my way. So, of course, I ups and leaves him, and there you are and here I am, as they

say. If my poor father— But I'm sure to suit you.

. . . Oh no, m'm, he doesn't bother me much now. Once when I tried another place—but I didn't stay because the lady wasn't any lady—he found out where I was and came and smashed the area window one night about twelve o'clock and frightened everybody to death. The lady was an invalid—a real one—first they said it was nooraliga, then they found it was something wrong in her eternal organs—they thought it was a burglar, so I had to call out it was my husband. . . . Oh no, m'm, you needn't be afraid of that—he won't bother me any more.

How many in fam'ly, please? . . . Oh, as many as that? I don't suppose, though, you want much waiting on. . . . Oh no,

of course I don't mind what I do—I am perfectly willing to do anything you would want me to, but I have never been used to doing any menial work, and I'm not very strong— But I'm always cheerful and willing to oblige, no matter what it is.

Do you entertain much? . . . Oh, you do—I shouldn't like to do any waiting or anything like that in front of strangers and be looked down upon and have them forget I was once somebody myself. And as good a home, too, as any one need have, and always meat twice a week and fish for Sunday morning breakfast, and sometimes a haddock for tea—I have always lived genteel. I can play the piano a little, though, and could help entertain your friends that way, and my parrot— . . . Oh yes, m'm, I couldn't go any-

where without Dodo. I haven't any piano now, but I have a little concertina; I like to play for an hour or so before I go to bed at night—it doesn't take up much room, and one or two hymns sort of sets me up. And sometimes along in the middle of the night—I don't rest so well since my second—second husband—I like to get up and play a few tunes to soothe me and send me to sleep again.

. . . Oh no, m'm, the other servants wouldn't mind, besides they would soon get used to it. How many do you keep? . . . Is that all? I thought by the looks of the outside of the house—but, of course, I saw the difference the minute I got inside. I suppose you wouldn't expect me to eat with them, would you? . . . Oh, you would? Of course, I don't mind anything you would want—I have

a good disposition and very obliging—but I shouldn't—the other lady where I stopped, the invalid, she saw at once I was a lady and treated me more like a friend. She was a bit weak-minded, too, but she never forgot I had seen better days, and treated me as such. Once a lady, always a lady—I can tell one the minute I see it myself. I have never done any real hard work—my first wouldn't let me—he was afraid I would spoil my hands. He treated me like a graven image under a glass case, much more than a human being.

I suppose I could have the evenings to myself? I am attending a course of night-lecture reading now, and I shouldn't like to miss that. I could get you a ticket some time if you would— . . . You wouldn't? . . . I used to recite in my

young days, too. There was one I used to do, "The Maniac's Bride"—I did it once for a manager when I thought of going on the stage, and he said he had never heard anything like it. Perhaps you would— . . . Well, I could some other time if you would like it.

Do you have all of the washing put out? . . . You don't? I shouldn't like that. Of course, I am perfectly willing to work and do anything you ask me to, but I didn't suppose any one would ask me to— And any one can see I was once a lady. . . . No, I have never waited on table, and shouldn't like to. . . . No, I couldn't do any cooking . . . a hot kitchen always gives me a headache since I have had so many troubles. If my poor father—

I could go and live with my brother,

but my sister-in-law—that's his wife—we don't get on together—she has a nasty disposition and no book-learning to speak of. She was a milliner's apprentice down Kensal way—and I says to my brother before he marries her, I says, I remember it just as well as though it was yesterday—it was on a Saturday night—I remember it because William always wore a green tie with white spots of a Saturday evening—I says to him, "William," I says, "William, mark my words, if you marry that milliner girl with her head full of feathers and things, it will bring you no good." And it hasn't. You couldn't expect her to be anything than light-headed, though I say all her troubles she has brought on herself of her own doing.

No notion of bringing the children up

properly, and with no idea of making them show a decent respect for me—not a bit of it. They behave terrible, and last winter the youngest child—the second but one—had the whooping-cough—and with no flannels—and she so fond of clothes herself—running about the nursery without a stitch on. She's so vain—letting the children go without a sole to their boots as long as she has a hat to her head—although she did make them herself, as she says, and has a right to do as she pleases. They have just bought a lovely suite of parlor furniture, second-hand, but you would never know it—not a scratch on it—covered with green carpet-like, with red and yellow roses on a brown ground. And an imitation palm, nothing real about it—except the dust on the leaves—in a brass pot with chains on it.

And they bought a cow, too, from a reduced widow-lady—she had to sell out—little old, and part of one ear gone—in a fight once the dog bit it off—they didn't buy it, though—on account of the children—but it didn't affect the butter. I must say my sister-in-law can make good butter when she's a mind too. And her hide like satin—you see she was made a sort of pet of—she had been brushed every day—but when they bought her the children wouldn't keep it up, and my sister-in-law said she wasn't going to play manicure to the best cow that ever lived. So, of course, she never looked the same after. I don't blame her for that, but she shouldn't have treated me the way she did. I used to like to get dressed of an afternoon and sit in the drawing-room window in one

of the best chairs, with a bit of needlework—nothing heavy—something ladylike and genteel—and she wanted me to do the children's mending instead—with the door closed and a bit of fire in the grate and a cup of tea later. But when she insisted on spreading the *Weekly Busy Bee* all over the chair before I sat on it, for fear it would get hurt—she was so sarcastic—I felt the sting of it all and I told her I was a lady, if she couldn't see it and wasn't, and she and the children could go to perdition for all of me—the sooner the better, and I hoped she would have bad luck to the end of her days. And off I went and here I am—

. . . Oh yes, m'm, you'll find I have a nice, sweet disposition—always kind to animals and dumb beasts and human beings alike. I suppose you wouldn't

want me to wear a cap? . . . Oh, you would? I shouldn't like to do that, although I am always willing to oblige and don't care what I do. With my first I always wears a cap for breakfast—I think every lady does—but only for looks. Excuse me, m'm, but have you a husband? You don't mind my asking, but when a lady starts to live out she can't be too particular with whom she's going to live. . . . Oh, you're a widow, too, just with relations living with you? O-h-h— It does seem sort of strange for a widow-lady to be living alone with no husband and only relatives with her —not that I mean to criticize by so saying. Has he been dead long? . . . You don't care to talk about it? I hope it was a nice comfortable disease, like consumption, where they lay quiet and don't

rush about and break things like fits. Poor dear father was took with them quite awful—usually of a Saturday night—it was very hard on us he used to break so much furniture. He used to see a green lizard he said, but mother and I couldn't find it, though he used to declare it was walking on the wall. But once when I had a cold and some one made me take a hot alcohol punch, well, father came in with one of his fits and began crying about the lizard walking on the wall, and I looked up and this time, if you will believe it, I saw *two!* But that was the only time. Poor dear father—I never see an old broken chimney-pot but what it makes me think of him—there used to be one just across the street from where we lived.

My sister, she's married, too, and I could

live with her if I liked, but her husband and I don't get along well together—he has such a bad disposition. My sister can't see it, though I did my best the last time I visited her to show her where George wasn't doing his duty by her, but all the thanks I got for my pains was a polite hint from him that my company wasn't wanted any longer. My sister doesn't understand bringing up children neither—her two boys were running about the streets using bad language before they could walk or talk. And many the spanking I gave them unbeknownst to their parents, but it didn't do any good—in one ear and out the other. One of the boys swallowed a penny while I was there—though where he got it I don't know—I never saw any money lying around so you could notice

it. He nearly killed himself, but we gave him an anecdote quick—mustard and water—and then held him up by the heels and shook him—it flew right across the floor, and the younger boy picked it up quick and put it in his bank—it's the only way, though he didn't like it at the time—a stitch in time covers a multitude of sins, I always say.

. . . What? You don't think I will suit? Well, I would have thanked you to have told me that before I came, and saved me the trouble of wasting all my time. I was just about to tell you I wouldn't think of stopping in this house. If my poor dear father—I wish you a very good morning!

The Country Post-Office

The Country Post-Office

The combination post-office and store is situated a considerable distance from anywhere, and is set close to the roadside. It is of no particular school of architecture, nondescript in color and vaguely reminiscent of underdone pastry. The interior is pervaded with a composite odor, a curious blend of codfish, tobacco, leather, kerosene, peppermint, tar, sassafras, axle-grease, molasses, and a certain moist and indeterminate fragrance emanating from the syrup reservoirs of the hard-working soda-fountain. The front right-hand

space of the store is devoted to the post-office, the postmistress being also assistant dispenser in the goods department.

At various vantage-points are displayed brilliant-colored lithographs setting forth the multifarious virtues of particular liniments whose remarkable curative properties are equally beneficial to man or beast. A new chicken food breeds extraordinarily stout birds, of a build and plumage never beheld save on the descriptive poster. Giant ruby beets, saffron turnips, and carmine radishes the size of potatoes, burst from the same bed treated by a magic fertilizer. A monster bill, portraying impossibly huge cattle, announces the plethora of attractions to be viewed at the approaching county fair. Close behind the counter an attenuated yellow-and-white cat nests cozi-

ly on an open box of crackers. The post-mistress, lean of outline, but ample of tongue, steps forward to the goods counter to greet a customer.

WELL, land o' livin', if 'tain't Mis' Libby! I ain't seen you in a month o' Sundays. How's all the folks up to your house? . . . Still havin' them spells, is he? Queer he don't get over 'em—one way or 'tother. Why don't you try some o' this new-fangled boneless surgery? Mis' Lamb's Kitty's always goin' in for all kinds o' new doctorin', an' she says she's sure it's goin' to do her a lot o' good, it's so dretful painful. . . .

Ain't never heard of it? Well, it's s'prisin' what some folks don't never hear about. . . . Oh no, she ain't sick

THE POSTMISTRESS STEPS FORWARD TO THE GOODS COUNTER TO GREET A CUSTOMER

none — leastways their own doctor couldn't find nothin' the matter with her, so she says she felt pizen sure she had some hidden, eternal trouble that hadn't come out, an' she'd heard these here doctors was diff'runt an' could find somethin' wrong with you when nobody else can. You see they say, "I understand it —the trouble's all in your j'ints. They ain't put together right—some's too loose an' some ain't tight enough." So they pull 'em out or push 'em in, as the case seems to be.

Yes, it does seem to be inquirin' too deep into the unscrutinizin' ways o' Providence, but Kitty, she's sot on it, an' she says any one can learn it in a few lessons, an' she's goin' to take a course. She says she thinks there's more in it than dressmakin', an' peo-

ple can't send back if they ain't suited.

She says you ain't any idea how solid you're hitched together till you get one o' them oysterpath doctors after you. She was fastened together all wrong; the doctor give her to understand the whole job was botched. One day he showed her a skeleton's head down to the office, an' an image of a foot. She said you ain't any idea how undressed you look in your bones. Well, it's keepin' up with the times, I s'pose.

Them piece-goods? Well, now, I ain't recommendin' none o' them goods to *you.* They ain't all they's represented. You know Mis' Snell she bought a dress o' that green-an'-purple plaid with the fine line o' yellow runnin' through it—dretful han'some pattren. Well, she hadn't wore

that dress but three years 'fore she made it over into a sort o' party dress for the church sociables—she put a wide green satin belt on it an' a bunch o' make-believe forget-me-nots pinned on the shoulder—it touched it up wonderful. I don't like her, but she knows how to look dressy. One night Lem Hulick spilt lemonade all down the front of it, so she took the back breadths—they was kind o' narrow—an' made Johnny a real cute pair o' pants. You mightn't b'lieve it, but first time he set down hard in 'em they all busted out. No, it ain't real strong goods as it should be—I can't recommend it for wear—but if you want somethin' just to *look* at, you'll go far 'fore you'll find anything near so pretty. . . . Yes, you better wait—the fall goods will be comin' in soon.

Terrible how near Mis' Beeks come to losin' little 'Bijah. You'd think she'd know all about childern, havin' buried six. . . . You didn't hear? She's so careless. Why, they took him to the camp meetin' over to Swamp Lake, an' while they was havin' the special service for the salvation of childern, 'Bijah got too near the edge, an' fell in an' would never have gotten over the drowndin' if it hadn't been for the artificial perspiration they worked on him. . . . Oh yes, it sp'iled the day for 'em—specially after they found they had laid him too near the lunch-basket, an' the victuals was all water-soaked.

My land, but I'm just about tuckered out. If them city boarders up to Mis' Binney's don't stop gettin' so many o' them picture postal cards from furrin

parts I'm goin' to quit! Ain't no int'rest-in' readin' on 'em, neither. An' not one of 'em what stops to think o' me, standin' here by the hour stampin' them 'tarnel things! An' they ain't content with that, but come rampagin' down here at all hours o' the day an' always wantin' somethin' I ain't got or never hearn tell on!

This here candy's been here sence last spring—an' et off by the very best people in this village, an' it ain't good enough for 'em! Just 'cause it's a little bit dusty, I s'pose. Asked if I didn't keep no better—so I got in twenty-five pounds the best I could get, an' you won't b'lieve me, I hadn't had it a week 'fore the very last scrap was sold. And askin' me if I don't *keep* candy—last I'll get o' that— *Keep!* There ain't no keep to it! I can't stand that.

Yes, just what I say—strange them city folks 'ain't got no sense. P'r'aps it's 'cause they're always tearin' round so fast in all that noise doin' nothin'. Them Donaldsons built their front porch in the back o' the house just 'cause they had a *view!* Can you beat that? Think o' havin' nothin' better to do than stan' 'round an' look at scen'ry. An' they got one o' them white iron bath-tubs put in—an' they're only goin' to stay here three months in the year—if that ain't a sinful waste o' good money. . . . That's it, they ain't any idea how to spend for comfort—it's just reckless show.

Mis' Sneeder's 'Manda Annabel she done some chores up there to help out, an' she says they had the queerest notions. She says at meal-times they done nothin' but laugh an' talk all the time—

you wouldn't 'a' had any idea they was eatin'. An' they keep the blinds an' winders open all day long—lettin' the wind an' air right in on everything. She said it was sinful. An' they ain't never in the house. You'd think if they got so much money an' book-learnin' as they make out, they'd stay inside—more private. In the parlor 'stead o' the settin'-room, with the blinds drawed, an' readin' some respirin' work. That's my idea o' elegunce, an' I guess I ain't far wrong. The young lady is real del'cate. The cook told 'Manda the doctor kept her on a diet since last spring—one o' them furrin names for a sofy, I guess. Poor thing, she must get dretful tired o' layin' there so long. An' they don't give her no spoon victuals at all.

Well, I snum, if there ain't Mis' Hitch-

cock comin' up the hill now. She must o' got out o' that last batch o' jell quicker'n she thought. Here, T-o-m-m-my—T-o-m-my—run over home quick's you can an' tell Hiram not to take all day 'bout his dinner an' hurry back an' help me. Landy Goshen, I 'ain't more'n one pair o' hands to answer fool questions with at the letter winder an' wait on customers! Beats all how you get imposed on.

She's gettin' stout. See how she puffs comin' up that hill. An' she looks sour 'nough to cruddle ev'ry pan o' milk in the butt'ry. She don't get no good out o' life 'tall—she ain't never happy unless she's miserable worryin' over somethin'. I stopped in the other night while she was renchin' the supper dishes, an' the way she was goin' on 'bout ole Mis'

Hitchcock was a caution. She says she 'ain't no real objection to her, but she's so set up 'cause she thinks no one can do piece quiltin' quite so good's she can. Sets there in Mis' Hitchcock's settin'-room winder all day long, takin' up the place an' sun she wants for her geraniums. She says it's good for her bronical tubes. 'Course Mis' Hitchcock don't begrudge her nothin', seein' how she's goin' to 'herit her Paisley shawl an' her silver sugar-bowl with the knobs on it. But her settin' there in that sun, takin' it away from them plants as she *wants* to thrive an' *live* an'— Well, I ain't sayin' nothin' to no one, an' there ain't none as can say I opened my mouth at the wrong time an' did no hurt to no one by so doin'!

Well, I guess I got a dose all ready for

her. She's got a letter pos'marked—as near as I could make out—where his folks come from, an' I miss my guess if it ain't from ole Mis' Hitchcock to say she's comin' to spend the winter with 'em again. It's 'bout the time she usually writes to say if she's comin'. . . . Try some o' them new lemon crackers in the barrel while I'm waitin' on her—she won't be long.

Well, Mis' Hitchcock, how be you? Lookin' kind o' peaked for you. . . . An' your head ain't stopped yet? . . . Still goin' 'round an' 'round? . . . That's just like Mis' Muggs' sister. They never could tell when she was goin' to start in with one o' them spells—like as not it would be Monday, when there was an extra heavy wash, or they was gettin' ready for comp'ny, or it was house-cleanin'

time—couldn't tell nothin' 'tall 'bout it. . . . Yes, just the same. She's so nervous you never know how anything's goin' to 'fect her. She suffers terrible. 'Tother day I was down there, an' she'd got 'em all scairt to death sayin' she was goin' to suicide herself. Said she couldn't stan' it no longer—she just wanted to die right off. I wanted her to try one o' Peters' Petrified Pellets for Perverted Persons, but she wouldn't—she says there might be somethin' dangerous in it. The whole fam'ly's awful sot in their ways. I sent her over an elegant mess o' peas the other day, but I s'pose she won't touch 'em.

Oh yes, there is a letter for you. Here it is. Will you set down an' read it here? . . . No? . . . All right—I hope you'll get over your head soon. Good-by.

Say, ain't that just like her? Wouldn't open that letter here, so's not to give me the satisfaction o' knowin' whether his mother's comin' or not. She wouldn't give out a piece o' news not if 'twould kill her.

There's a postal come for Mis' Kinney from Susie—she's comin' up soon to spend two weeks with her. Her writin's awful hard to make out. Mis' Kinney says Susie says they're terrible exclusive up to Midgeville Corners. That means none of 'em pay 'tention to anybody else. She says it's very swell, an' so she likes it all right, but it's terrible lonesome at times, so she goes down to the kitchen an' has a dish o' tea an' a bit o' gossip with her hired girl. She says style is wearin'!

There goes Minnie Stodger buggy-ridin' with Seth Trumann again! Say, I think

it's a sin the way her mother lets her go on. An' look at that long feather she's got on—hanging down near to her waist, or where it ought to be if she *had* any waist. Mis' Crocker says they raise special ostriches now for them long feathers. Beats all how they can improve on Nature nowadays, but 'taint no more than Addie Smedley can do herself. Them paper roses she makes are a sight more real lookin' than any flowers that ever was growed. An' talk about improvin' on Nature—you know Marthy Runk's Jo, what got his leg took off unintentional in the sawmill, an' they didn't know's he ever would be no good to 'em—when 'long come Addie, an' how she done it I dunno, but some way she made him a false leg as would go twict as well as the other. In fact, he had to

run most o' the time to keep up with it!

Well, I'm just tellin' you what I *heard*. We all thought Marthy would be some 'bliged, for they say them store-made legs is awful dear if you only buy one at a time. But would you b'lieve it, ev'ry time she wanted Jo to mind the baby or go on a errand, that there leg of his'n would rare right up an' run off with him in 'tother direction as she wanted him to go, 'spite of all he could do. I don't know what they'll do 'bout it. Seems a shame to take off a leg as is such a good fit, yet it seems like flyin' in the face o' Providence to keep it on. Dretful hard to decide them questions without causin' dissatisfaction.

Say, Mary Jane Crocker's goin' to have the law on her new husband. . . . That's

it—she ain't sure what he's done, but she's heard tell he married some one else down to his home town afore he got hitched to her, so she's goin' to sue him for bigotry. She says she's willin' to forgive him after a while, though she's goin' to put him in the lockup now. She says it'll be a good chance for her to get all his winter underwear darned good—he won't have need o' much anyhow—just set 'round an' read an' sleep an' play cards with the others.

I s'pose you know 'Melia an' her ma have gone to the city to see 'bout gettin' her a good position on the stage? You 'ain't? Well, it's true, as I'm the one to tell it. 'Melia an' her ma are goin' to see all the theatrical managers till they find a nice gentlemanly one that suits 'em, an' then take up with him. She says

she couldn't do a thing if she went with one she didn't like an' he made her nervous. She's wrote down part o' "The Suicide's Dream," an' is goin' to recite it for 'em. She's 'bout made up her mind what kind of a part she's goin' to act—if she don't change her mind again. She ain't particklar what the words is, as long as she can wear a white swiss evening dress trimmed with ermine, an' tuberoses an' a di'mond crown in her hair, an' long black silk gloves, an' a pongee op'ry coat hangin' on her arm, an' carry a bokay o' autumn leaves an' everlastin' flowers. Won't she look elegunt?

She thinks Maudie will like to do waitin' in one o' them dressy rest'rants where they cook cakes in the winder. She's goin' to make a writer out o' Claribel—it ain't so showy, but it's solid, an' they

say it's awful payin' when you can beat ev'ry one else at it. She's goin' to have her write po'try an' advertisements an' plays for 'Melia to act in.

Well, Hiram Peglow—I should think it was 'bout time—I thought you never was comin' back from dinner. You take the longest while over your victuals, an' here I'm near wore out trapsein' 'round here waitin' on ev'rybody, an' no one to help me, an' bein' pestered to death with bein' talked at, an' the more I do in this here store, the more I'm let do, an'—Landy Goshen! here comes a whole troop o' them city boarders. Here, go dry out them sody-water glasses an' put a couple o' teaspoonfuls o' that lemon flavorin' in the syrup bottle an' fill it up with water, an' there ain't no more strawberry till I can stew up some cranb'rries for colorin'!

At the Hair-dresser's

At the Hair-dresser's

(*She enters, hurriedly, one of the small curtained compartments. She is breathing hard, and her countenance betrays her agitation.*)

OOD gracious!—I'm so out of breath, I was afraid I would be late for my appointment. And you are the only one in this whole establishment who can marcel properly. And I do hope that uppish young person at the desk hears me, and takes it to herself, too! The last time I was here a

friend called me up on the 'phone, and she never let me know till it was too late to have tea, and so it was very important. She gave as an excuse that I was in the middle of a shampoo—and couldn't talk in the 'phone. It wouldn't have mattered at all—it doesn't run in—I've often done it before. I *had* intended to give her that back-comb you said had gone out of style, and that hurts my head so I can't wear it, anyway. I won't, now; I'll give it to my sister. I wanted to make her a little present; nothing that she would hesitate to accept. That's a good idea.

Just pull the curtains a little closer—that woman in the next place is staring in at me. At least I can't see her, but I know she is—they all do. Wait a moment—let me see who it is.

Why, it's Minnie Rogers! How do you do?—you're the last person I expected to see here. I never knew you, you had your hair done. . . . Oh, I didn't mean that—I meant it never looks—looks—as though it had been! . . . No, no—I didn't mean that, either. What I was trying to say, is—*was*—it never looks as though it had been touched—artificial, you know. . . . Mine? Why, my dear, it must be this strong light—you can't see anything clearly, it's so bright. I never, *never* put a thing on it. The last place I had it shampooed, the girl let something fall in the water that made it look queer, but it wasn't anything—nothing that changed it at all. I was awfully angry about it at the time, but it's worn off since.

Where do you think I just came from?

. . . The lunatic asylum? Now, if I thought you really— Of course, I know you didn't. Still, it was a pretty good guess, even if you didn't mean it. The hospital. . . . No, no — there's nothing the matter with me. It's Carrie Douglas— she's been for five weeks without moving on her back! And all on account of charity! . . . Well, if you will just let me get in a word edgewise I'll tell you all about it.

I had to walk through the most terrible streets, and those dirty little urchins made faces with their mouths at me! Excuse me from any more sick friends. Naturally I only went for a very good reason—I wanted to get her dressmaker's address—you know, she's never in whether she's out or not. I knew I'd find her this way. I really don't like her at all.

She's the kind of a woman who never looks you straight in the eye unless your back is turned. And even then you can't be too sure. Not that I care at all. . . . You know, she just got crazy over charity. I never did believe in it myself. She had a lot of time she didn't know what to do with—I mean, between luncheons and calls and things that really matter—so she thought she would take up charity to amuse herself with. And that's always the way I find it, too—just when you think you're going to have the most fun it never turns out right. . . .

Where did I leave off?—Oh yes,—Well, the family she picked out to be charitable with weren't the right ones at *all*. They were so ungrateful and so dirty, and didn't thank her one bit, and there were so many sets of twins all about

the same age, she said, and they would put their sticky fingers right on her best clothes, and when she spoke about baths they insulted her horribly—I couldn't begin to repeat it! And when she told them how uplifting it would be to have a few beautiful things about, if only a cluster of flowers in a graceful vase—it would have such an effect in molding the children's characters—why, they almost threw her down-stairs. In fact, that was the way she was hurt. Coming out of the hallway she caught her heel in the ruffle on her underskirt—her husband always fought against her high heels—and she fell. The doctor said if she had been a bit more fatally hurt she wouldn't have lived. Or something like that. She's through with charity forever! She said when they picked her up she was

absolutely speechless with fright, and only had strength enough to whisper, "Take me home." People with accidents always say that, don't they?

. . . Margaret? Oh yes, she's gone to Havana, I believe—I never can remember whether it's an island or a State—anyway, she's gone to one of them. She's gone for a rest. I saw Dick the other day, and he looks as though he was enjoying her rest more than she is! . . . Oh, I suppose so—men are all alike, only he's more so than most. Really, though, she has the strangest kind of insomnia—every time she falls asleep it wakes her up! She says it's very dangerous and perfectly new. Her doctor hasn't named it yet—she's the first one to have it. You know, she always would get ahead of any one else. Some people call her

clever, but I say it's just spite! You see, my Katie is third cousin to her sister's cook, and they are very friendly, so there is really nothing that goes on in her house I don't know about, though, of course, I never encourage listening to servants' gossip. But, my dear, you may believe me or not, but some of the tales I've heard fairly made my blood stand on end!

Oh, my dear, another most awful piece of news I've just heard and was able to tell poor Carrie at the hospital—Mrs. Darrell's little boy was bitten by a dog, and they think he was mad. . . . No, I don't mean annoyed—the dog—hydrophobia— . . . No, it hasn't taken yet, but think it may any moment. It will be so much harder on Ethel than anything quiet—they say it's noisy—and she is so

calm, and hates any kind of a disturbance. He's such a badly behaved child, too. Every time she tells him to "don't," he goes right off and does it! . . . Yes, it's awfully sad. . . . Now, do go over and see poor Carrie, and try to cheer her up. I won't say she isn't trying her best to get well as fast as she can, but that young doctor I saw over there certainly is *fascinating*. I think I'll go over and see her again to-morrow. We ought to do all we can to make the time pass pleasantly for her. . . . All right.—Good-by.

Didn't know I knew her? Yes, indeed, we've been friends for years, though I'm not very fond of her. Oh no, I simply wouldn't—I wouldn't think of such— . . . It's not really a dye?— But I don't see— . . . Tell me about it. . . .

Oh-h-h—simply restores it to its natural color? But my hair is—was—dark brown. To make it red wouldn't restore it—that would be dy— . . . O-h-h, you can restore it to any color you like. Oh, I see. Well, suppose I—I mean, I have a friend, her hair is dark brown, like my hair was—is —and she had it bleached, and now it's almost back to its first color. Let me think—yes, that was the first color. Well, suppose she wanted to have it—er—restored red, would it hurt her hair any? . . . Make it grow all the better? Oh dear, I would like it; but my husband —he's so suspicious. He can't help it—it's his business—he's a lawyer. You couldn't fool him.

I don't mean one of those terrible dishonest lawyers. He doesn't do divorces or any kind of criminals like that—no

kind of law that isn't nice. He promised me he wouldn't before we were married. Of course, he wouldn't even if he hadn't —hadn't promised, I mean. If he didn't think one of his patients—whatever you call them—was in the right he wouldn't think of taking the case. I suppose you must have heard of him—he has a big black and gold sign on Broadway. . . . Haven't you, really?"

. . . No, I don't like the way you have done my hair at all—I knew the moment you started you were getting it all wrong, but I thought I wouldn't say anything till you had finished it. You'll have to take it all down and put it up again!

On a "Seeing London" Motor

On a "Seeing London" Motor

(*She climbs up nimbly, but her gigantic hat, outspreading and upshooting, meets with several mishaps before she finally wedges herself in one of the rear seats. She speaks to her left-hand neighbor.*)

WOULD you mind squeezing over a little nearer the edge? Thank you ever so much.—And if you'll squinch down a little way in your seat my hat brim will go right over the top of yours.—And then when you want to come up I will lean the other

way—see? You'll find it much more comfortable, I think—mommer and I always arrange this way when we go out in cabs together. . . . It's horrid sitting way here in the back, but I suppose those other hateful people arranged for their seats in advance.

Goodness, the time it takes for this thing to get started! If this had been America we would have been half-way round and on our way back by this time! Now, how in the world am I going to see anything over this enormous hat this woman has on in front? And the way her head sticks out, too. I am going to ask her to take it off.

. . . She wouldn't—spiteful thing. Said she would take cold—she'd just gotten over one.

Well, I guess mommer and I have got

the system down to the limit about beating the tip habit they have over here. In our hotel in Parus there was a whole lot of elevators, so we never went down in the same one twice running—we marked down on a card, a—b— and c—and then we would put a cross on the one we went in last. In that way I don't think they remembered us—*much*—so when we went away we didn't give any of them a thing. Then we managed splendidly about the waiters. We had tea and toast in our room in the morning, and when the waiter came with the tray I would tell him to put it on the floor outside, and then when we had finished I would slide it out again, so we really hardly ever saw any one. The service was awfully bad, though. It was all right at first, but after a few days we

had to ring and ring and *ring* before any one would answer. It was awful. And the chambermaid was always waiting outside and saying something about the tray—pointing to it and talking so fast. She spoke such funny French, though, I never could understand her.

. . . Oh-h—you're not American? Somehow I didn't think you looked quite natural—you know what I mean—not—not like *us*. . . . And you've never been in America! Well, if that isn't the funniest thing I ever heard of—never been in America! Well, I can't get over that—how strange you must feel! I should think America would be the first place any one would think of going to. Just imagine any one never having seen our Flatiron Building, and the subway, and the elevated road, and the Museum of

"THAT BEAST OF A CABBY RAN UP THE STEPS AFTER US AND MADE SUCH A FUSS WE HAD TO GIVE HIM AN EXTRA SHILLING"

Art and Natural History, and all those sort of—well, sort of "wonders."

. . . Oh yes, I've been to the British Museum—I think I'm likely to remember it—that beast of a cabby ran up the steps after us and made such a fuss we had to give him an extra sixpence—we called a policeman, but he said it was all right. I really think they stand in with the cabmen, for we had several experiences like that, and every time the policemen were against us. That wouldn't happen in New York, I'll tell you. . . . And one of the mummies there looked exactly like a man I met on the ship, and I nearly died laughing over it. I'm always seeing resemblances.

What place did the man say this was? . . . Oh, St. Paul's. We have a city in America by the same name—I wonder

if the church is named after it? . . . Well, perhaps—but really now, wouldn't it stand to reason that it's much more natural to name a church after a city than a city after a church? You can't deny *that*. . . . Oh yes, I know, but really when things are so terribly old I find a few centuries more or less really doesn't matter at all—at least not to me.—Isn't it awfully dirty-looking! I expected it would look much bigger. I don't believe it's nearly so high as our new Singer Building, nor as big as our Cathedral we're building up. . . . Well, maybe, but how can you tell when our Cathedral isn't done yet?

. . . I think it would improve it a lot if it had a gold top on it like Napoleon's Invalids in Parus.—You ought to see our stock-yards out in Chicago—from

pig to bacon in about three whisks of a lamb's tail! . . . No, I wouldn't go inside if you paid me. These churches are all alike—nothing but benches and windows and statuary, and people saying their prayers. I can't tell one from another. And they all smell stuffy and unaired. After you reminded me I remembered, though I could always tell this one, because when I go to take the train for Aunt Adelaide's at Christmas I always take a Christopher Street car to the ferry. And the other name is about a bird. . . . Oh yes, that's it—I always can tell it when I hear it, but I do sometimes hesitate between Robin and Wren.

Heavens, how slow we go!—If this was New York we would be through this crowd in a jiffy. . . . Perhaps, but what would the hospitals do if there weren't accidents

occasionally? And I know all about hospitals—I took up charity after our bridge club was over, and I used to read for them once a week. I got awfully tired of it though—particularly after a terribly good-looking doctor left. It was horribly depressing seeing all those sick people looking so forlorn and gloomy. And you would think they would be as happy and cheerful as possible when everything was done to help them. I made up my mind, though, that the more trouble you took for them, the less they appreciated it—so I gave it up.

Goodness, I wish that man wouldn't shriek so loud through that megaphone —I can hardly hear myself talk. What time do the stores close here? I've got a lot of things to get before we go back. . . . What did he say that was? Oh, the

Law Courts. They don't look a bit interesting. I went to a murder trial in New York once—I didn't tell mommer about it, though. It was perfectly lovely. He was so frightfully handsome, and used to get so pale and sit and sit and twist his hands.—And he had the most gorgeous eyes I ever saw. I don't believe he was guilty a bit, though they did convict him—such a shame. I sent him some flowers once, but he never answered them.

Where's a good place to get cheap handkerchiefs to take back? That's the worst bother about coming over here—everybody expects you to bring them something. I hate to do it, but then when the rest of them come over they won't bring you anything if you don't do the same. So I have to.

. . . Yes, I'm crazy to get back—I love the trip. . . . Oh no, I wasn't thinking about the rest or air. No, indeed, I can get along all right without *them*. I had such a perfect time coming over. The first officer was simply dear to me—it was moonlight all the way—and we used to go way up toward the bow and look for phosphorous in the water. I never saw any. And then he used to lend me one of his coats with brass buttons on it when it was cold—perfectly fascinating. When no one was around, of course. I'm crazy to go back on the same boat.

. . . Oh, goodness, more churches—well, I don't care what they are, I absolutely can't stand the sight of another one—I've seen about a million over here, I think. It got so when we arrived in a town the first thing I would ask if

there was a cathedral, and where it was, and then when it was pointed out I would walk the other way!

. . . There's another post-card place. I suppose they won't stop a few moments while I jump off and get some? . . . No, I suppose they wouldn't.

I got one of those lovely skin-tight Directoire dresses in Parus—I don't know what popper will say when he sees me in it. It's so slinky and lovely, and I've learned to walk just like a snake in it. I believe I could play any kind of a tragic part in that dress—Camille or Elsa or the Merry Widow or—anything— . . . Oh, this is Strand Street, is it?—It can't touch Broadway.

Well, I was just going to tell you—I thought of going on the stage. My manicure always said she was sure I would

make a great actress. Of course, I wouldn't play funny parts or anything where I couldn't look nice or wear lovely clothes. Only where I could have long trains—yards and yards dragging on the ground, and be misunderstood. Don't you know—where the husband would think I was in love with the best friend, and would treat me horribly, and then in the last act it would all be explained and show I was a martyr and only doing it to help—don't you see? And then when he was dying I would pretend I didn't care, and then when he was almost at death's door I would send for a specialist to try and pull him through. But he wouldn't be able to—and I would wear pink and a diamond aigrette in my hair for that—and then I would forgive him while they played some-

thing soft. I can see it all just as plainly.

I've thought sometimes I would write plays—I have so many ideas. But in America the best people wouldn't write or anything like that.

. . . This is Trafalgar Square? I do think it would look ever so much more home-like and attractive if they would have some trees and grass in it—all our parks are like that. . . . This is where the suffragettes make speeches to the unemployed, isn't it? . . . Yes, I know about Nelson, too, but wasn't there a lot of talk about him? You know, in my country people can't be heroes and things unless they are perfectly proper.

. . . Yes, I know that's the National Gallery—I was in there one day when it was too wet to go shopping—I've made

it a sort of point to go to a picture-gallery over here when I can't go shopping—I mean when you really don't intend to buy, but just go to look. There was one picture there that was the most marvelous thing I ever saw—you wouldn't believe me. A woman holding a cat—and do you know that cat was the absolute living image of one that lives next door to us in New York, and spits at my dog every time I take him out. I never saw such a likeness in my life. I wondered if it was a portrait. . . . Why, of course, I did — every one. But when you have seen as many pictures as I have you finally find out that there isn't so much difference in pictures after all—one gets to look just like another.

. . . Have I been to Westminster Abbey? Well, I should think I had. I

"ONE OF THE MUMMIES LOOKED EXACTLY LIKE A MAN I MET ON THE SHIP"

did it in fifteen minutes the other day—that's a record, I guess. I found the cheapest little dressmaker in one of those funny little stores off from a big one, and I had just a quarter of an hour between fittings to devote to seeing something, and I went there. You see, popper made me promise, before I left home, I would see one sight every day. This trip is to finish me off.

If you had seen the way I raced through that place—just the way I make a bee-line for a bargain counter in New York—but I saw everything. Of course I didn't read all those epitaphs on the graves and things, but I bought a guide-book coming out so popper won't know the difference. Some of those old images were in awful bad shape, though.—Now with us every time a nose or a hand was off we

would put a new one on. I mean if we had it in America. I'm not crazy about old things, anyway—all musty and full of microbes.

. . . Now, isn't that hateful? Here we've been poking along all the way, and now he rushed us right past that window with all those lovely things! Mommer is out prospecting for shirt-waists for me this afternoon while I'm "improving"—I just despise it.

. . . Oh-h, did you see those lovely hats —I can't stand this any longer—I'm going to make him let me off—all this sight-seeing has given me a headache.

Good-by—perhaps we'll meet again sometime. You must look me up if you ever come to America!

The Consoler

The Consoler

(*She comes slowly up the garden-path, with drear and sodden aspect—her limp, dun-colored skirts cling closely to her heel and follow in the wake of each footstep. Her hands are wound in a grayish-black, beaded, cloth cape, which is wrapped tightly about her. Her head is crowned with a rusty black bonnet of indefinite design, decorated with a weary and spiritless plume. Her mouth is downward bent in melancholy trend, but in contrast with the rest of her general bearing, two sharp and ferrety little eyes are constantly on the alert. She carries a dingy, black leather bag.*)

WELL, Amelia, here I am! I wonder what a house of mourning would be in this here village without me! I've heard some remark they wouldn't know there was any mourning and unhappiness around unless I was there to help them on with it. Well, we all have our mission in life if we only find it out before we are dead—and then I don't know as it's going to do no good to nobody. . . . What say? I didn't catch it. I've been a little deef in one ear ever since I sat up with Jabez Rice's departed the other night—it was

sort of cold all over—not a fire in the house.—And I've brought my bag in case you want me to stay all night—I can just as well as not—or if you don't, I can take home any little odds and ends and cold bits you haven't any use for.

I felt I must run in and try to cheer you up a mite. Mary said you wasn't to be disturbed and wouldn't see any one, but I knew you'd be glad enough to see *me*, so I just pushed by her and didn't wait for an answer.

. . . My, you do look bad. Of course, it's no more than to be expected with all that fune'ral to get through with—I thought you was going to break right down in the middle of it. Still, you do look a sight worse than I thought you would. It all goes to show what folks been sayin' about you ain't so—that

you didn't care at all and would be glad to be a widow. Some said the remains made such a happy-lookin' corpse was because he was glad to get away, too. There ain't any accountin' for the spiteful things some folks' tongues will say. I never believed it anyway, myself. What's done's done, I say. Besides, I knew it was only the art of Mr. Skids made him look like that—he surely is an artist in the undertakin' line—this new idea of givin' them any expression you want is certainly wonderful, though sometimes dangerous. There was Sarah Lock thought she'd like to have 'Manuel look pleased and cheerful, and when his mother saw him with that happy smile on him she said it must have been because Sarah had been a poor wife to him, and he was tickled to get away—

and then she went right off and took Sarah out of her will—I just met the doctor as I was comin' along here, and he told me somethin' that ought to cheer you up a good deal. He said you oughtn't to worry no more, because it wasn't really nothing serious the departed died of. I thought it would be a relief to your mind.

That crayon oil-paintin' is an awful good likeness of the deceased—and so life-like. Many's the time I've seen him standin' just like that outside the Eagle House Bar, with that undecided look—tryin' to make up his mind, I s'pose, whether he'd go back in or go home.—Yes, yes—many's the time I've watched him curious—he usually went back in. It must be a great comfort to you now. I think a black crape bow on the corner

would improve it. Mis' Squibbs done it for her first—or was it her second?—anyway it was one of the beginners. She's a wonder for new ideas. She had all her best white china tea-set painted with a broad black border of mourning. It didn't cost her a cent—her niece was up from the city, and she's just learned china-painting—in fact, she's full of it—I think that's what gives her those terrible heads. And it was all sort of crooked around the edges, but as Mis' Squibbs said—you mustn't look a gifted horse in the mouth. Her third doesn't seem to like it much, though, so now she's going to have it with a band of gilt on either side—that'll fix it all right and no one's feelin's hurt—either here or hereafter. She's had a real bad cough lately, but I think she's better now—the doctor's

given her some new kind of an invocation to rub on her chest.

. . . What say? Don't care for the china notion? Well, you might do something of the kind if it wasn't no more than to touch up your iron dog on the lawn—if only the ears and tail. Every one would take it as a sort of tribute to the departed, and I think the neighbors would approve, too. I am the last person in the world ever to say anything unpleasant to no one—whether they should deserve it or not—I don't set myself up to judge nobody—neither human bein's or others—catch as catch can, is my motto. But I do know, and repeat it, you'll find plenty to contend with, with all the gossip been goin' on since you been shut up here. If you could only hear all the hateful things people are sayin'—I am glad you

can't—I don't know how you'd stand it. Now, Mis' Mooney said you wouldn't hardly got back from the cemetery before you'd have that picture up garret and ready for your next—she said you hadn't any too much time to lose, neither. I'll be glad to tell her she was wrong.

. . . You had a good big crowd, didn't you? 'Liza Betts said you had more flowers than any one thought you'd get. She's got her troubles, too—she thinks little Henny's comin' down with the measles—she doesn't know just what.—Anyway, it's one of those spotted, outside diseases—just 's her sister-in-law's come to spend the winter—broke out in a rash all over—and she's never had her before, and she's very partickler about it. And 'Mandy hardly over the whooping-cough. There's a terrible lot of sickness

around now. You ought to be awful careful—you're so run down. Mis' Allen she said the day of the fune'ral—well, I won't tell you what she said—it might upset you—but if any one was to say to me I looked like I was near death's door, myself, it wouldn't scare me a *mite*. Still you ought to be careful. You remember John Hinton was hardly cold before Lucindy was took after him. And lightning never strikes twice in the same place. You never know what the hand of Providence is going to do next.

Dreadful bad weather, ain't it? Seems like the sun wasn't never going to shine again—so gloomy. I got a kind of chill walkin' up here, not that I never care what happens to me when I feel I am doing my duty—no matter how hard it is. No, I would starve with my

mouth shut, sayin' nothin'. That's my way.

. . . What say? . . . Well, now you come to speak of it I wouldn't mind a cup o' tea—I hadn't thought of it before, though. I haven't had much app'tite for my vittles lately. . . . And if it ain't too much trouble a little cold meat and bread and butter and a bit of cake—I never take nothing substantial at this time of day. I came off in such a hurry I didn't have much lunch—not that I hardly ever take it.

Is that your new bonnet and veil in that box? . . . You won't mind if I try it on? — That's handsome crape—how are you going to wear it? I have a notion for having the crape down the back on week-days and over the face for Sundays—and other dressy occasions, of

course—I think it's more elegant that way. Mis' Mooney said she didn't think it was as heavy as Mis' Squibbs's for her first. How much did you pay for it? I won't repeat it—I never tell those things. . . . You did? Mis' Squibbs paid four dollars and sixty-eight cents for hers—and her niece got it for her, too—down to the city.

When do you think you'll be goin' into colors again. . . . What say? . . . Hadn't thought of it yet? Well, there's plenty of time, I suppose. Mehitable Grimes says she thought you would be beginning to take notice by the time the church sociables commenced—she's got the spitefulest tongue. — There's been considerable talk as to what you ought to do with the deceased's clothes. Some think as they ought to go to your brother,

and there are others as think that long black coat should go, by rights, to Deacon Stodger. — You know they talk about sendin' him out to India as a missionary to the Chinese. But you needn't be afraid any one will gossip 'bout you an' him.—He ain't the kind to take any other man's left-overs! I suppose you won't be keeping that green nuns' veiling with the red polka-dots on it now? I don't want to suggest nothing, but Mis' Adams' Eleanor Marie is keeping comp'ny with that young city clerk up to Doolittle's Emporium, and I think—if you'll sell it cheap—I could get her to buy it—it would be just the thing for her to wear when he takes her out buggy-riding Sundays—trimmed with some fresh bows or a little passementerie across the front—she sits down so much

there needn't be nothing on the back of the waist.

. . . There, now, if you ain't cryin' again. What's the use of my tryin' to cheer you up a bit if you're goin' on like this? . . . My sakes, it does take a terrible long time for that kettle to boil. I'll just step out to the kitchen myself and have a look. . . . No, don't you move, I'll go.

. . . Well, I guess you'll be glad I went out there—such a mess as that kitchen is in—I couldn't stand it, but some don't seem to care what the hired girl does. . . . What say? . . . No, I suppose you haven't been seein' much to things lately —you'll be surprised when you do look 'round. She seems to be dreadful wasteful, too. I see there's a large piece of the fune'ral cake left in the back butt'ry.

If you don't care about it I just as soon take a piece home with me. . . . No, you needn't wrap it up now—I'm going to set awhile longer with you till I see you chirking up some.

. . . Well, here's the tea at last—Mary doesn't seem to hurry none, does she?

. . . Miss Martin has such lovely tea—she keeps it in a jar back of the parlor sofa. She gave me some the other day—she doesn't give it to everybody—only those she specially cares for — Did you ever have any? . . . Oh, you didn't. It tastes entirely different from this. . . . Oh no, I didn't mean anything like that. This is very nice when you're cold, or in a hurry, or some one comes in. Miss Martin never can do enough for me when I go there—gets out her best china and makes me try all her new jellies. I've

got my mission in life, I guess, and no one knows it better than me, if I do say it that shouldn't.

. . Yes, I'll take another cup, please, with plenty of cream. . . . Oh, it isn't cream—it's milk after all, isn't it? All right—with plenty of *milk*, please. I get so used to cream at Miss Martin's—she says it's vulgar to have anything else—she says nothing's too good for me. I always feel so comfortable when I'm there. . . . Yes, I'm going there again very soon. . . . If you don't mind, I'd like Mary to make me another piece of toast—and I'll try a little of that raspberry jam I saw as I was comin' through the butt'ry. I'm not real hungry, but sometimes I get kind of faint about this time of day.

Dear, dear, I hate to hear you sigh like

that.—And you look whiter than when I come in—that's just the way Lidy Coggins began before she went into a decline—didn't think there was nothing the matter with her, and all the time the end had begun.

Your geraniums don't look as though they were ever goin' to bloom again, do they? Some folks don't seem to be handy with flowers. When I was lookin' out of the kitchen window I noticed your garden ain't lookin' up to much neither. Everything sort of backward—I guess it ain't goin' to improve much, neither, if this weather keeps on like this—and I think it will. It always seems like that when the head of the fam'ly is taken away. When the hand of Providence and desolation has set the seal of affliction on a sorrowing widow,

why, there ain't no hope for nothin' left.

There, if you ain't off again.—And I thought I was doin' you good. That's the way with sorrow—you never know what it's goin' to do next.

I suppose you'll be takin' up a good deal of church work now? The bereaved generally does till they feel better. Of course you'll have to be careful or you'll be talked about a great deal—I mean even more than you are now—that young assistant bein' unmarried and all the unmarried women tryin' to catch him. A good many thinks he ought to show his respect to the cloth by takin' Jennie Driscoll—she's gettin' on now and bein' in such affliction with the poor health she always enjoys—she won't get another chance—it would be so proper

and churchly all around, but he don't never seem to go there. He's awfully set in his ways for the instrument of a higher power. Mis' Driscoll's awful discouraged of ever workin' her off otherwise. You know her green silk dress she's been keeping for so many years hopin' to have it made up for Jennie's weddin'? Well, she's got kind of discouraged of ever havin' a chance to wear it, so she had it made up for your funeral. What did you think of it?

. . . You didn't notice it? My, won't she be mad when I tell her. Well, perhaps you'll see it at the Piggots'—that is, if he goes off, too, this fall, as we all expect—Mis' Driscoll said she thought she would keep it for occasions like that, or weddin's—it will do for either. She's goin' to vary it by wearin' her mosaic

brooch and a bunch of artificial red roses for one, and just black silk gloves for the other. She's a perfect pattern in what's dressy to wear.

I tell you what, don't any one get ahead of Mis' Piggot for forehandedness. Got her new winter cloak—black's your hat and trimmed with a double row of crape buttons. She's gettin' all her things dyed black, too. I saw them all hangin' on the line as I come along, and there sat Sam Piggot a-settin' in the kitchen window lookin' out at 'em just as mournful-like—seems though he understood what was expected of him. So, I guess you ain't a-goin' to be alone in your affliction if Mis' Piggot can help it. Seems though there is such a thing as bein' too sensible about some things.

I think Mis' Riggs's goin' to have her

operation soon's she's got her house-cleanin' done. Somehow I don' think she's never goin' to get over it, though she seems very hopeful. I told her, anyway, she better prepare for the worst. Little Evelina's lookin' sort of meachin', too—she's never goin' to be a healthy girl, neither, I guess — always sort of ailin'. They're dreadful frightened about her, too, and have sent to the city for a specialist. Such a foolish notion, for they say children's diseases are simple anyway, and I should think any kind of a doctor would do. Besides, she's very small and backward for her age.

Well, well, this world is an awful vale of sorrow anyway—nothin' but gloom—and I'm trying the best I can to help things along. Some are resigned, but others ain't. I don't criticize no one, and

I ain't got nothin' against no one—I suppose we are all a-doin' the best we can according to our lights—but some might try a little harder—that's all. . . . Well, well, . . . If you'll have Mary wrap up that cake for me and any little things you don't think you'll want I'll be goin' along—if you're sure you don't want me to stay all night? . . . All right, but I can just as well as not. I guess I'll drop in an' see how old Mr. Piggot is gettin' on—I think he needs cheerin' up, too. You send for me any time you get blue again. Good-by.

Almost a Tragedy

[*A Study in Feminine Moods*]

Almost a Tragedy

(SCENE.—*A very small room overfull of very new-looking ornaments, lamps, clocks, paper-cutters; bonbon spoons in profusion together with very shiny silver, very heavy cut glass, etc., on each article of which is plainly writ, "wedding present." It is the home of a very new bride. This last is attested by the young woman herself, who flutters about a tiny table set for two, changing the position of a fork or a spoon here and there, and, with head atilt, critically regards each move. She is very pretty, of the large-eyed, baby type. Finally, the arrangements to*

her satisfaction, she withdraws a rose from the bowl adorning the center of the table, and approaching a mirror, fastens the flower in her hair.)

WHAT an old married woman I'm getting to be! A whole month to-day since I became Mrs. Edward Prendergast Frothingham! And I've actually heard people say married life is dull—I haven't found it stupid a bit — and I'm sure, after four whole weeks of it (*complacently*), I may be considered a somewhat competent judge. And as for excitement, it certainly seems lively enough with two maids coming and two going every week—it seems as though we had four maids!

. . . And we haven't had a single quarrel — no, not one — oh, that is, well, of

course, it was all Edward's fault! It was really too ridiculous of him to object to my putting powder on my nose. Why, I've done it for so long I positively believe I would take cold without it!

Mrs. MacDowell says they always begin like that—make you stop doing all kinds of things you like and always have done. She says they do it to show you how important they are. But she says it's all a question of *who* puts his foot down *first* and *keeps* it there—and keeps it there the *longest!* And she must be right, for her husband is lovely to her—lets her go away whenever she wants to, and lets her stay as long— And he's always at her days at home—not like most men—and he never steps on your skirt or gets under your feet, and he never spills a drop of tea when he passes

you a cup. Oh, she must know—she says men are all right if they're trained properly from the beginning.—And yet (*with an air of indecision*), I don't know whether I like her— No (*decidedly*), I *don't*—I hate her! I have a sort of idea —at least a *feeling*, she would like to flirt with Edward herself. Still—she does seem to be wise.

(*She seats herself in an incongruously large, stiff and slippery, stuffed and buttoned-in, leather chair. A nuptial gift from Uncle Jo, who believes in "giving something substantial you can't break." N.B.—Mrs. Frothingham had pleaded for a glass curio-cabinet.*)

Now, Mrs. MacDowell says every man likes you to have his evening clothes all ready and waiting for him when he comes

home at night. But she says you mustn't do it every night, because if you do he soon takes it as a matter of course —indeed, gets dreadfully disagreeable if you ever fail to see to it—whereas, if you only occasionally show him the attention, he takes it as a great favor, and thanks you for your thoughtfulness, and says, "what a comfort a wife is anyway!"— There might be something in that! . . . Oh, nonsense—that's all very well for people in general, but Edward and I don't have to go in for that sort of thing. What a good husband he is to me—four whole weeks!— Though Mrs. MacDowell says it sometimes takes a whole lifetime to discover if a man is going to make a good husband, and even then you can't always tell. What a horrid thing she is anyway!

(*Suddenly she sits bolt upright in quite a panic.*)

I hope I haven't forgotten anything about dinner to-night. Last night we didn't have a thing but cold bacon and eggs left over from breakfast. Of course it wasn't my fault—I had to spend so much time at the cooking-class learning how to make those lovely fancy puddings that ought to have stood up, but always went down, that I didn't have time to study housekeeping.

(*Again she hovers over the table, touching its dainty appointments with gesture almost caressing.*)

Anyway, the table looks so pretty I'm sure Edward won't notice whether he has anything to eat or not. (*Slowly, and with a look of rapture.*) He is so different from any other man!

Edward and I have the sweetest idea. It seemed so long to wait, a whole year, before we could have an anniversary, that we have decided to have one every month—sort of monthliversaries. So on the 24th of each month we are to have our little celebration. To-night is the first. Mrs. MacDowell said we would get tired of it in no time—spiteful cat!

Now I *think* Edward said, be sure to leave the claret in the bottle and put the champagne in the decanter—that's the way I have it, anyway. He'll be so pleased to see how well I'm learning to remember! I wonder what the girls at the convent would say if they heard I knew all about *wine!*

Edward says I'm learning how to be thoroughly conventional. I have had lessons enough to find out what that

means, anyway, and that is doing what you don't like, what you never intended to do, or never would think of doing, to suit the ideas and notions of other people you don't care twopence about! But Edward says we cannot disregard the laws of society in which we move. (*The foregoing with great dignity.*) It sounds terribly profound, but Edward is so clever he can make up the most wonderful speeches that I can't understand at all. How stupid I must be!

Oh, I haven't looked at the newspaper to-day. I'll just have time to glance through before Edward comes. (*With an air of martyrdom she clutches the paper, and commences her task.*) Such a waste of time, but Edward likes me to be up on the important topics of the day—so let's see. Must look at who's dead first.

(*Peruses column disappointedly.*) Not a soul I know—how disappointing. Now for Edward's important topics — Oh, fancy, blouses like that for six and six—Isn't that wonderful! (*She rustles rapidly through several pages and then pauses.*)

Aeroplanes — Bulgaria — Turkey — Austria — Parliament. (*Rustles on with increased speed.*) Suffragettes — unemployed— Now, I don't understand it—I'm sure I never have an idle moment the whole day long. There are always calls, and when they fail, concerts and the hair-dresser or the manicure or the dressmaker. And men can always go to clubs or something. . . . Bah, how tiresome!—why will they fill the papers with such rubbish?—I don't believe any one reads it.

"Matrimonial difficulties"—*this* looks

interesting—"Threw a lighted lamp at his wife"—And probably broke it, too—how thoughtless some men are—"Wedded but a month"—just like Edward and me—"Wife sues for a divorce"—oh, not a bit like me!—"Husband's attentions to wife's friend the cause." Now, how perfectly ridiculous. (*She replaces the paper with a judicial and superior air.*) Why, I'm just delighted to think that at last I've made Edward take a little interest in Alice Greatorex, the dearest friend I have in the world.

She is such a dear, sweet girl I don't see how any man could fail to like her. But Edward says— (*She hangs her head and simpers.*) Oh, well, Edward's a goose about me. Still, I made him promise he would call on her some afternoon on his way home. I know she feels

hurt to think he never goes there except with me. . . . Dear old fellow, how different he is from most men! (*She smiles once more and pensively turns round and round a gold circlet on the third finger of her left hand.*) But I think that just plain ordinary husbands should be trusted more than they are. How are they going to learn to keep out of mischief unless they first discover what it's all about? Though that Mrs. MacDowell says most women trust their husbands a great deal more than they deserve. What a horrid beast of a creature she is, anyway.

The idea of imagining every time your husband looks at a pretty woman that he is in love with her! (*This is accompanied by a largely vague but charming sweep of the arm.*) Why, I can't make Edward admit a woman is even good-

looking when I'm around. But Mrs. MacDowell says that no man—unless he is a fool—will admire another woman before his wife. Well, I suppose some women are just foolish enough to get fussed over a little thing like that. There, this very article is probably a good example of that very thing.—Wife takes it into her head husband is showing too much attention to her friend, and rushes off to the divorce court, without waiting, I'll warrant, even to get her hat on straight!

Now, how much wiser to sit down quietly—just as I would—think the matter over coolly, then after dinner, when you both feel comfortable and happy, ask him *very gently* if he thinks perhaps he has been just a weeny, teeny bit over-zealous in trying to make himself agree-

able to your friend. Never for a moment raise your voice, or let him think for a single second you really attach the slightest suspicion to him. Encourage him by your confidence in him. And then, of course, he will tell you all about it, and the whole thing is settled in no time, without a particle of ill-feeling on either side.

(*Leaning forward she rests her chin in her upturned palms, her elbows resting on her knees. The pose is peculiarly suited to her style.*)

Though even that isn't necessary. The true wife has only to say to herself, "I trust my husband!" And then nothing on earth can disturb her peace of mind! I'm so glad I was wise enough to learn all those things before I was married, for it may prevent my having many heartaches. — Though Mrs. MacDowell

says all your fine theories and reasonings go for nothing when something really serious happens. I am beginning to think that woman is a perfect fiend and mischief-maker!

Why, if any one were to come to me with a story about *my* Edward, and place even the most convincing proofs of his wrong-doing before me, it would weigh as nothing against my supreme faith and belief in him!

Why—why—if my Edward were not to come back to me for a whole year, it would not shake my trust in him, and I would welcome him back with open arms, and not even ask where he'd been!

(*Quite overcome with the vastness of her feeling, she rises to soar to further heights, when she encounters a maid who enters at that moment.*)

Well, Wood? . . . No, Mr. Frothingham is not home yet. . . . Late? Did you say *late?* . . . Fifteen minutes late? Why, you must be mistaken—Mr. Frothingham is never late for dinner. . . . You are sure you are not wrong? . . . No, certainly not—don't serve dinner until I ring.

(*For an instant she remains rigid, then, her eyes widening with terror, she commences to pace the room.*)

Fifteen minutes late! Fifteen minutes *late!* What does it mean? Where is he? What is he doing? I cannot understand it—he has never been late before, and to-night of all nights—our first month-liversary! Let me think—let me think! (*Presses her hands wildly to her head.*) This is too horrible. . . . It's some terrible accident! (*She pauses, her face growing very white.*) He is going to be brought

home to me blood-stained and mangled—before my very eyes—right here on this carpet! And only this morning I warned him to be careful of those awful motor-'buses. . . . I suppose it will be in all the papers—and half of my trousseau not yet touched—and now all black—and it's not at all becoming. Oh dear, oh dear, I'll lose my mind! (*She falls into a chair, quite unable to stand.*)

Of course *business* would not detain him at this hour, either. . . . What can it be—what can it be? (*Inadvertently her hand brushes the discarded newspaper beside her, and she recoils as though stung.*) No, no, no! It couldn't be *that*—this poor woman had a bad husband—and she was jealous—I'm not. I don't even know how it feels. . . . And one can't be jealous without having some one to be

jealous of. (*A curious gleam narrows her eyes, until, through scarcely parted lids, two very black pupils glitter.*) I—I—wonder who I can think of? . . . Now, I must be calm, perfectly calm and collected. *Who* can it be? Of course, it's just as this poor woman discovered (*tapping newspaper*)—another woman in the case! Mrs. MacDowell said—Oh, what a clever woman she is! If I only had her here now to advise me—she would be able to tell me where he is, and what he is doing, and what I ought to do! Oh, my poor brain—my poor brain.

(*She continues to walk agitatedly about.*)

Now, who can it be? Mrs. MacDowell said it was always your best friend who betrayed you, but I can't— Wait a minute— Ah, I see it all now— *It's*

Alice Greatorex—my dearest friend in all the world! . . . But she needn't think she deceived me—I saw through her all the time—she's thin enough to be transparent, goodness knows — and Edward never liked thin women before!

I knew she would turn on me some day—I expected it before this. . . . That's why she didn't marry Dick Halliday—though I always knew he preferred me, and only made up to her because I snubbed him. She—she waited till I married so she—she could steal my husband. (*She sobs violently.*)

Oh yes, I understand it all now—and—and Edward only married me so he—he—oh dear, what a muddle it all is!—But it's perfectly clear to me!

(*Thoroughly fired by righteous indignation, she draws herself to her*

full height, while her eyes blaze with rage. She still sobs intermittently.)

Still, they need not have flaunted their perfidy in my very face in this outrageous manner. Oh, what shall I do—what shall I do? . . . I'll—I'll leave this house—I'll go this moment—where's my hat? (*With grim determination, that sits strangely on her childish face, she snatches up a be-feathered hat that lies on the table, and stabs viciously at it with the pins.*) I'll take pattern after this poor woman and get a divorce! (*Puts hat on all awry.*)

Oh, the monster—I wouldn't forgive him—I wouldn't forgive him if he stood up on his bended knees this moment and begged for pardon all wrapped in gore! No, I would say . . . What's that strange noise—it can't be—what is it? (*Slowly she withdraws the pins from her hat, and*

hurls it across the room, her face one vivid streak of ecstasy.) It sounds like Edward's latch-key — Yes, it is the front door. . . . And that's Edward's footsteps! . . . Oh, Edward, what gorgeous roses! . . . For our first monthliversary? . . . Oh, you *darling!*

The Way of the World

The Way of the World

(Her Story)

H, Ethel dear, you *darling*—how perfectly heavenly to find you at home this lovely afternoon. I hadn't an idea I would see you when I made up my mind to come—I was sure every one would be out, and then I could get all my calls off my mind without a bit of trouble. . . . Now Ethel, that is utterly unworthy of you—you know I didn't mean that—*you* were the *one* person I was hoping to find.

Besides, I have heaps and heaps to talk to you about. . . . Oh, you silly, there's nothing in it at all—there's nothing between Irving Browne and me. I don't say there might not be if he had *his* way —I know every one seems to think he is in love with you. I wouldn't go so far as to say that myself, for I must admit that I do think—in fact, I'm *sure* —he is just a bit—a *teeny* bit—taken with me. Still, that's another story, and if I don't get on with what I came to talk about it will never be told. . . .

My dear, isn't that a new ring you have on?—And on your engagement finger, too . . . Oh, it isn't an engagement ring? Well, dear, I hardly thought it was because— Oh, well, you know I thought you were—well, too sensible to go in for that sort of thing. Now I come

to think of it, I met Irving Browne the other day in Bond Street. He stopped me and made me look in at a jeweler's at a ring that looked ever so much like the one you have on—asked me if I was going to have an engagement ring if that was the sort of one I would pick out for myself. Did you ever hear of anything so pointed? I knew in a moment if I gave him the slightest encouragement he would have proposed to me right there, in the middle of Bond Street—and the 'buses going by, too. But I didn't. I really wouldn't have told you this if that ring on your finger hadn't made me think of it. . . . Oh, your aunt gave it to you?

Well, my dear, I want to tell you all about Mrs. Grant's week-end party and about Douglas Sloane. Talk about being

persecuted with attentions—it was simply too awful; don't know what will happen to the poor boy if I throw him over entirely. I never have seen such a case of absolute slavish devotion—actually followed me about like a little dog. I didn't mind, though, for I could see poor Flora Grant was wild with rage about the way he hung about me. How she has gone off this last year, hasn't she? And the way she chases after poor Major Rodney is too absurd.

Well, there was Douglas—I will tell you later how I came to call him by his first name—waiting at the station for me with the pony-cart. Of course, I saw he had arranged it so he could have a little tête-à-tête before I met the others. When we drove up to the house there was the whole gang out on the lawn

having tea. Flora Grant pretended to be so pleased to see me, but I could see she did not like the idea of Douglas about bringing me himself in the pony-cart. Douglas at once flew over to her to try and placate her, I suppose, but presently came back to me with a face about a yard long. It was so ridiculous, as though he could not leave me for a moment to speak to another woman—and the hostess at that—without going into a spasm!

He wouldn't cheer up a bit until I had let him have three cups of tea and endless cakes. When the dressing-gong rang Flora called him over, and I heard her say something about "dinner"—I couldn't catch what it was. Mounty Roe had stopped to speak to me, and though I am pretty good at listening to another

conversation while some one is talking to me, this time I couldn't catch a thing but that one word, "dinner." When we started for the house I wish you could have seen Douglas's face *then*—a yard and a half long this time—fancy just because he was going to be away from me one little hour. I managed to whisper to him it wouldn't be for long, and he mumbled something about he hoped it wouldn't. I couldn't help but be sorry for him.

I wore my green spangled frock with a red rose—I knew Douglas liked green. They were all waiting when I came down, and I wish you could have seen Douglas's expression when he saw me! The others were all paired off already, and poor Douglas lounging in a corner waiting for me.

At dinner I had, of course, him on one side and Harold Wood on the other. I thought I would upset Douglas a bit, so I started right in—with the hors d'œuvres—to flirt desperately with Harold. It was too funny. Douglas immediately turned to Edith Scott—horrid little cat—who was on the other side of him, and began the most animated talking you could imagine—laughing the whole time just to show me he didn't care what I did. Of course, this set me off worse than ever, and such howling around our end of the table you never heard. When I was in the middle of the soup, though, my conscience hurt me a bit, so I turned to him and said he might talk to me a little if he wanted to. I wish you could have seen his face again—black as a thunder-cloud. You can always tell

when a man is getting really desperately in love with you by the nasty way he begins to treat you. When we were well into the salad I dropped him again and turned to Harold.

After dinner Flora — such a tactless hostess, isn't she? Seems to delight in making every one as thoroughly uncomfortable as she can—invites you there just to see how disagreeable she can fix things. Well, she insisted on having me sing. It was awfully pretty, really—we pulled the piano close up to the long open windows, and the moon streamed in—then some one turned off all the lights. Every one began to drop away, one by one—out to the terrace in twos and threes — but Flora and Douglas stopped way off in a shadowy corner. I could feel, though, how moved he was,

and he started to go, too, but Flora whispered to him, and he came slowly back, and then she went out, and we were alone. Pretty soon I stopped playing and ran my hands over the keys, and Douglas came up to me looking so unhappy. Well, I don't know what it was —the moonlight I suppose—he was leaning over the top of the piano looking at me, and I half sort of leaned toward him—quite accidentally, you know—and then I don't know, he sort of edged toward me or I toward him, and then I stood up or he leaned over, I forget which, and then, somehow, I found my hand in his—he didn't dare to squeeze it hard—he is one of those men you have to encourage a little—and then—well, in some way he managed to kiss me.

Of course, I tried my best to stop him

—I wouldn't have had it happen for the world—you know I don't believe in that sort of thing—a girl can't be too particular—and I knew mamma would be awfully cross about it—I mean if I told her. I never have told her anything like that—I mean if it had ever happened before I wouldn't—you understand. But, anyway, there you are. So, of course, after that I called him Douglas. I could see how pleased he was about it, for he fairly turned pale at breakfast next morning, when I said it for the first time, at the table.

Flora was green with rage, and nearly choked in her coffee-cup. I forgot to say I saw her in the doorway the night before when Douglas ki-kissed me. I thought it was just as well to have a witness, don't you know, in that kind

of thing, so I didn't draw Douglas's attention to it.

I suppose I am sort of engaged to him now—I can't say I am fearfully keen about him, but then every one says he has plenty of money, so, perhaps, that would help on a loveless marriage anyway. It's too bad, though, for the love to be all on his side, poor boy—I'm sorry for him.

. . . Oh no, I haven't seen him since then. . . . No, nor heard from him after we came back to town. I really suppose the poor chap is too timid—you haven't any idea how bashful he really is—but that was only two weeks ago. I suppose he is afraid I will throw him over—poor boy, I must write him again and ask him to tea. . . . Ye-es, yes, I did write him once, I think, but he hasn't replied—

probably didn't get the note—the post is so uncertain nowadays. Of course, you know, nothing is really settled about it, so you won't say a word, will you? . . . I knew you wouldn't, dear. Well, I must be off—good-by, you darling.

(*His Story*)

Well, Irving Browne, by all that's holy— Come in, old man; haven't seen you in a month of Sundays. Take off your coat—hang it anywhere—on the floor if you like. Draw up by the fire—rotten day, isn't it? . . . Oh, well, perhaps it isn't— Got the hump the worst way ever since I came back from Flora Grant's week-end party. Topping little widow that. Plenty of ginger, too, but the best sort in the world—hasn't got her mind

on the L. S.D. all the time—she's the kind would stick to a fellow if he hadn't a bob to bless himself with.—Have a peg? I'll join you—been joining myself all afternoon—shove the soda over, will you—you're nearest. Have a cigarette? —You'll find the box on that table. Don't mind, I suppose, if I put a pipe on? . . . Good boy!

Well, let me tell you, Flora Grant has about the wisest head on her pretty shoulders—spoiled my week-end, though —I've been week-ending there rather frequently of late. Said I was altogether too attentive to her openly, and every one was gossiping about it—of course, I suppose any one, unless they were blind and deaf, couldn't fail to see I'm clean gone on the little widow. Said she had a neat scheme to shut up all the cats with.

Announced, first thing I got down there, the only thing to stop their talking about us was for me to be openly attentive to some one else, so she had invited Hilda Rathbone for my express delectation. If there is one girl on earth I simply can't stand it's Hilda Rathbone—little devil, I believe she knew it. So she invited a crowd last week-end to witness the row, and so spread the news broadcast about my infatuation for the Rathbone.

Started me off first thing to meet her alone in a pony-cart at the station—I kicked at that, but it was no use—her ladyship was adamant, and I had to go. When we came trundling along in that ridiculous pony-cart there was the whole crowd out on the front lawn having tea. Always before we have had tea comfortably down at the tennis-courts, but

trust Flora to arrange matters—every mother's son and daughter lined up to gape at our triumphal entry. I was hot under the collar, I can tell you, and as soon as I had landed the fair Hilda with a cup of tea, rushed over to Flora and begged her to let me have a turn around the garden to cheer me up and steady my nerves. She wouldn't — sent me straight back to the slaughter, and it was only after I had nearly drowned myself with tea and consumed a dozen or so cakes that I felt sufficiently strong to go on with the game.

Thought, of course, as I had behaved so well about the afternoon, Flora would reward me by letting me take her in to dinner. Not a bit of it—called me over to her just as the dressing-gong sounded and said I had to take Hilda in to dinner,

as I was most likely to lose my head then, and be conspicuously attentive, and every one there to see it. Had to walk up to the house with Hilda, just about as miserable a man as you could see. Must have shown my feelings pretty plain, for Hilda whispered something or other about it not being for long—don't know what she meant—but I was in such a funk that I just blurted out I hoped it wouldn't be!

The stupid little minx kept every one waiting before she came down—wanted to make a show of herself walking in—and would you believe it—a girl with that complexion—tricked herself out in some sort of hideous green-spangled affair that made her look like a boa-constrictor—and then she topped off this horror with a red rose. When I looked up and

saw this ghastly combination come sailing into the drawing-room I came within one of chucking up the whole job then and there, but I got such a warning frown from Flora—bless her dear little heart!—why, I braced up to take my medicine again. As good luck would have it, though I had to take Hilda in to dinner, she had Harold Wood on the other side, and he is always a pal in distress, and when I tipped him the wink he began to make up to her furiously. Just as I was getting along rippingly with Edie Scott—nice little girl, that—I've always had a soft spot in my heart for her—of course I had also to keep a weather-eye out that the widow didn't observe all this—I knew she couldn't see me squeezing Edie's hand under the table.—As I say, just as I was enjoying myself Hilda turns

around and puts an end to everything—my spirits went to zero again. Never has any one had such a depressing effect on me—always makes me think of suicide and sudden death. I struggled through dinner somehow, comforting myself with the thought that at least I could arrange a tête-à-tête with Flora out in the moonlight, later—there is a most entrancing little summer-house down by the river, quite shut off from anywhere. But she insisted—out of sheer viciousness, I'm sure—insisted on getting my torturer to sing. I had a brilliant idea, and had the piano pushed as near the open window as it would go, to let as much of the sound as possible go outside, and then turned the lights off so her contortions couldn't be seen. Ever see Hilda going through the singing act?

No? You've got a treat in store for you. Of course, under cover of the darkness, every one began to slip away—they wouldn't have dared to with the lights on—and finally the little widow and myself were the only ones left. I suggested to her that we might run away to the summer-house for a few moments, but she said no, I must stay, and then off *she* went.

There was nothing else to do—I couldn't go on sitting way off in a corner like a spanked kid—when, too, you know a girl is clean off her head about you—you've got to show a little spirit—so over I went to the piano and leaned on it, looking as much like a love-sick calf as I knew how. Her unattractions didn't stand out so plainly in the moonlight, and if ever I saw a come-and-kiss-me

look on any girl's face, she had it—absolutely begging for it. I shut my eyes and made a swoop, and she rose right to the bait—fairly threw herself at me. Just then I thought I heard a swish of skirts, and sure enough, there in the doorway I made out the widow with some one—I couldn't tell who it was—then there was a smothered giggle and she was gone. Rotten luck, I call it. I tried to get a word with her later in the billiard-room, but she wouldn't have it—gave me the chuck at once, and I haven't been able to fix it up since. All the rest of the time she pretended to be terribly taken with that old mummy Rodney—but I could tell she was doing it just to get me wild. And she did, all right. Suppose she will come around after her wrath cools off. Shouldn't care to lose track of

her entirely. . . . The Colonel left her pretty comfortably fixed, I believe—Nice little place she's got down there on the river, and a bully good house in town—her family has money, too.

If you'll believe it—serves me jolly well right, too—next morning at breakfast Hilda began to call me "Douglas." 'Pon my word, old chap, I know I went livid. And, of course, her ladyship began to smile behind her cup, and I got wilder than ever. Can't help, though, feeling rather sorry for the little Rathbone, for there is no use mincing matters between pals, the girl is desperately in love with me—not conceit, you know, but I can always see through a mill-stone if there's a hole in it. They say she'll come into money when her uncle dies.

Hadn't been back in town an hour

before she rushed a note up by messenger, and she's been bombarding me ever since—about two a day—been going on for a couple of weeks—don't know what to do about it. Clean off her head about me—she comes into money, though.—Oh yes, I told you about it.—I say, old chap, do you mind if I ask you to clear out? I've got to dress and meet Edie Scott for tea at five—you don't mind, do you? . . . I thought you would understand it. Congrats again on your engagement to Ethel—she's a little brick. Good-by, old chap—have another peg on your way out. See you soon—call me up at the office.

(*The Hostess's Story*)

Why, Ethel dear, who would ever have expected to meet you here at this hour of the afternoon! Have you had tea?—

it's awfully late, I know, but I haven't had a bit of lunch. . . . Oh, you haven't? Good—let's go somewhere. My dear, I'm just in town for the day. I haven't a rag to my back—one does get so dowdy stopping so much in the country. I've ordered a ton of things. That's a nice frock you have—who made it? . . . Oh, really—m'm'm— Would you trust her with any really good material? I'm awfully particular. Let's go in here. Of course—always my luck—not a table to be had— Oh, wait, there's one. Whew! I'm tired. Had a crowd last week-end—I'm a wreck—I'll tell you all about it as soon as I've had a cup of tea. Thank goodness! here it is—you pour—I haven't the energy of a mouse. I wish you and Irving would come down one time, but I suppose you won't—newly

engaged couples would rather stay in town even when it's deserted and take 'bus rides on Sunday, and hold each other's hands. . . . Well, if not quite that, something like it. . . . No, dear, no cream and sugar for me—it's fattening, so I've sworn off—wish I could get a brandy and soda instead. . . . No, dear, I know—you can't here. No, no bread and butter either—starch is fattening, too—just a dry biscuit.

I'll hurry over my tale of woe about last week-end, because I want to talk clothes with you if I have time before I rush for my train. Of course, you know I have had an understanding with the Major for some time— What? Oh yes, dear, of course—I admit I have been flirting rather desperately with Douglas Sloane—not that I care a rap about him,

but he's presentable, and I hear he has a tidy bit tucked away somewhere—not that any one would know about it, for he is the stingiest man to take you out—when he does it. It always puts the servants in bad temper whenever they know he is coming down, he tips so badly. Anyway, the Major was getting a bit restive with my having Douglas so much at the house, so I thought something had better be done to put him off the scent. So I invited the least attractive girl I knew—I certainly wasn't going to throw Douglas at a good-looking girl, even if I was through with him—and that, of course, was Hilda Rathbone.—My dear, I was going to ask you, but then I remembered you were just getting engaged. . . . Oh, Ethel, how hateful of you to take it like that—I didn't mean that at all.

Well, you know Hilda, how susceptible she is, let a man look at her twice and she is ready to fall on his neck—I don't like her at all, so I wrote her and said my party would be a flat failure if I could not count on her to come and stay the week-end—clever me. So I made Douglas think I was getting very much upset over some imaginary gossip I had heard regarding his attentions to me, and the only way to stop all this talk was to have him openly devoted to some one else—you see, I didn't want him to know about my engagement to the Major, either—for you know it really isn't settled—and won't be until I am perfectly sure about the money. You know, dear girl, I am the least mercenary woman in the world, but one can't live on love alone nowadays, and though I am the plain, old-

fashioned kind, and don't go in for all this heartless intriguing—still, of course, I have to be a bit practical.

So I explained it all to Douglas, and made him promise to devote himself entirely to her the whole time he was down there—for my sake, of course. It all worked like a charm. I pointed out to the Major on all occasions how devoted Douglas was in his attentions to Hilda, and that it ought to prove conclusively that he most unjustly suspected me when he thought I was flirting with Douglas. And Douglas really was getting on my nerves. To cut it short, my dear, Hilda and Douglas fell madly in love with each other, for I caught them in the drawing-room rapturously kissing each other in the dark. I made the Major look, too, and, of course, that

settled the matter with him entirely. Poor Douglas is such a stupid, too, I think they will make an excellent match. Oh, my dear, look at the time—I'll have to run for my train after all. I am so glad to have had this little chat with you—most people are so designing, and always with their minds on the main chance—I can't get along with them. Give my love to that dear boy, Irving—I think you are a very lucky girl—your ring is a beauty. You must come and visit us after the Major and I are married—providing, of course, I find his finances are all right. Would you mind, dear, paying the tea check?—I haven't any change, and I must rush or I'll lose my train—You don't mind, do you? . . . I thought you wouldn't. Good-by, dear. Don't forget to remember me to Irving.

The London Char-Lady

The London Char-Lady

(*She is dressed in rusty black that has seen the sun and rain of countless seasons. Her skirt, frayed at the bottom, trails in the back, but is quite five inches off the ground in front, and displays large, shapeless boots, down-trodden at the heel, and from which many buttons are missing. She wears a scanty black cape, embroidered in beads, the pattern long since obliterated, and trimmed with a rag of lace. She is crowned with a dingy, dun-colored bonnet of archaic design, and at one side droops a disreputable feather, that long ago has resigned all ambition*

to curl; the whole is tied beneath the chin with limp, black ribbon. She carries in her hand an unimportant-looking string bag, in which reposes an apron, tightly rolled. On her departure at night this bag or carry-all has swollen to alarming proportions and is full of irregular-shaped packages wrapped in newspaper. Immediately following her exit many sundries of the larder, in the shape of a cold joint, parts of pies, and other edibles, are discovered to have vanished, and the coal seems to melt into thin air at her approach. These matters are looked upon as her "perks" (perquisites), and comment or protest would be considered in execrable taste, besides availing nothing. Her garrulity is always of a lugubrious trend.)

GOOD MORNIN', m'm—'ow are you feelin' this mornin'? . . . Well? You don't look it, m'm. Just as w'ite as yer piller, m'm—more fit for a box than anythin' else. Got any pain anyw'ere? . . . No? Sometimes it's worse that way. Well, perhaps you will bime-by. We don't any of us know when we're goin' to get took. You just remind me of a lady I used to work for, m'm. I come in early one mornin', an' I see 'er lyin' there in the bed, m'm—just like you, m'm—an' I asks 'er 'ow she feels, an' she says, "very well," just like you, m'm—an' I 'adn't been

there one hour — believe me, or believe me not, m'm—w'en she was took sort o' faint, m'm, right 'ere, m'm—an' 'er wearin' the loveliest dress, m'm, all embroidered down the front with bunches o' gr'ipes—an' they 'as 'er off to the 'orspittal and cut to bits, before you could count Jack Robinson. An' she never come out, neither, leastways, not warm.

An' she was such a lovely lady, too, m'm, an' that fond o' me—you never heard the like. She used to say to me, m'm, "Skiffles," she says, "Skiffles, it does me as much good as a tonic to see you comin' in so bright an' cheerful of a mornin', an' you ain't outside the door at night but wot I feel 'appier." An' 'er 'usban', m'm, 'e was such a gentleman, too—nothin' stuck up or proud about 'im, m'm. W'y, 'e was just as common—

just as common as you an' me, m'm. 'E used to take a drop too much once in a w'ile, but don't we all know 'ow that is at times, m'm, w'en we're feelin' a bit down-'earted? An' nobody the worse for it, neither.

Well, one mornin', m'm, I was a-comin' along early—I was cleanin' a lady—an' she was a lady, too—lookin'-glasses in every room in the 'ouse, m'm, an' visitors to tea every afternoon, m'm, an' 'ats an' dresses an' boots, m'm, till you couldn't take a long breath, m'm, an' no lookin' in the corners for dirt, m'm, an' no 'untin' on the tops o' things for dust as you couldn't reach comfortable-like without the steps, and no eyein' you suspicious, neither, w'en you're takin' 'ome a few odds and ends out o' the dust-bin as wouldn't do nobody no good no'ow.

Well, as I was sayin', m'm, I was a-comin' along early, an' as I passes the 'ouse, there stands Mr. Foot—that was '*is* name, m'm—leastways, 'e was standin' the best 'e could, m'm, 'im bein' wot you might call just a bit, well, that way, m'm— There 'e was, sort o' limp, m'm, leanin' against the area railin' with his umberella caught between the rails wot 'e couldn't get out. You see, m'm, it was like this as it turns out to be: 'E 'adn't been 'ome all night, m'm, an' Mrs. Foot—that was '*er* name, m'm—'ad been sittin' up all night, watchin' for 'im at the dinin'-room winder, an' w'en 'e comes along an' sees 'er sittin' there, through the area railin's, 'e gets the idea 'e's at the Zoo, lookin' at the animals between the bars, an' 'e pokes 'is umberella in playful at 'er. But that was

all afore she died, m'm. But 'e was a puffick gentleman, 'e was— As soon as 'e sees me, m'm, 'e straightens up, an' takes 'is 'at off to me—an' 'im only able to stan' on one leg—lifts it right off 'is 'ead, m'm, just as though 'e was me equal. Oh, 'e was a gentleman, 'e was— But 'e 'ad a 'orrible 'ead after it. . . . An, wasn't 'e the 'appy gentleman w'en I'd see 'im of a Sunday afternoon, a-walkin' out with 'is two daughters, the two Miss Feet.

Now my 'usban'—you ain't never met my 'usban', m'm, 'ave you? I mean not social-like—only w'en 'e come after my money the other night. Now 'e could 'a' been a gentleman, or a preacher, m'm, if 'e'd 'ad 'alf a chance. You don't know wot 'e 'as in 'is brain, m'm—no more do I, no more does nobody else, m'm. But

'e sits an' thinks an' thinks, m'm, an' 'e says some day 'e is goin' to do somethin' as will astonish everybody. 'E's a wonderful man, is Mr. Skiffles, m'm, an' yet 'e ain't very strong, m'm—sort o' delicate-like, m'm, an' then again, 'e ain't just wot you would call indelicate, neither, m'm. 'E eats well, an' 'e sleeps well, but 'e ain't able to get up early in the mornin', m'm, an' w'en there's anythin' partikler 'eavy to be done about the 'ouse, m'm, 'e feels more like layin' down than nothin' else. But 'e's a good 'usban', m'm, brings 'is wages 'ome every Sat'day night, just as reg'lar—never a penny stopped out—that was, m'm, w'en 'e was workin', w'en we was first married, m'm, ten year ago. . . . 'E 'ain't felt up to much since then. But then, m'm, I 'eard say bad 'ealth is very refined, m'm, an' then there ain't

no 'casion for 'im to work 'imself to death with me always somethin' to do.

An' I tell you wot 'e thinks o' me, m'm. —Every mornin' w'en I takes 'im up 'is early cup o' tea, m'm, wot do you think 'e never forgets to say, m'm? 'E says, "Mrs. Skiffles," 'e says, "Mrs. Skiffles" —'e always says Mrs. Skiffles, just as though we weren't married at all—you know, m'm, 'e always seems more like a friend than a 'usban'—"Mrs. Skiffles," 'e says, "it's just like a bit o' sunshine comin' in at that door w'en I sees you there, all out o' breath, with my cup o' tea." An' w'en I'm cleanin' 'is boots, m'm, 'e never forgets to say to me, "Mrs. Skiffles," 'e says, "as I see you standin' there, cleanin' my dirty boots, I think you got the prettiest little w'ite 'ands I ever see on any woman." W'y, m'm, I

wouldn't miss cleanin' them boots and 'earin' them words for nothin' on earth.

An' then w'en I've tidied myself a bit, I carries 'im up 'is breakfast—'e likes 'is breakfast an' 'is pipe an' noospaper afore 'e gets up, these cold, dark mornin's —'e likes 'is comfort, does Mr. Skiffles, an' w'y shouldn't 'e 'ave it? 'E 'as all the instincks of a gentleman, 'as Mr. Skiffles, as any one can see. An' w'en I sees 'im all fixed comfortable-like, in front o' a nice bit o' fire, afore I goes out to my work, wot do you think 'e says then? "Mrs. Skiffles," 'e says, "I'll be sittin' 'ere all day long in front o' this fire, thinkin' about you an' watchin' that door to see your pretty face comin' in there at night." That don't sound like an 'usban', m'm, does it? Not a complaint out o' 'im, m'm. An' like as not

'e reminds me not to forget 'is 'alf o' pint as I comes by the pub at night. There ain't many like 'im.

I ain't never a-goin' to work for Mrs. 'Odgkins no more, m'm— She ain't no lady, she ain't, an' she don't know one w'en she sees it, neither. An' she's just got one o' them new wavy transfigurations for 'er back 'air, too. Not but wot she didn't need it, m'm—all the 'air she's got she 'angs on a 'ook at night, m'm. Well, I was up there washin' and scourin' 'er last week, m'm, an' was a-sittin' down for a moment a-restin' myself afore I begins, w'en in comes Mrs. 'Odgkins to me, an' she says, "Skiffles," she says, "Skiffles, I don't believe you done down them back kitchen stairs last time you was 'ere." Well, m'm, believe me, or believe me not, 'er comin' in like that give me

such a turn, an' I told 'er that I never 'ad 'ad no one never speak to me nothin' like that afore, an' I '*ad* done them stairs down last time I was there, an' if she wanted me to I would take my solemn word I 'ad. An' if I '*adn't*, I was just a-goin' to do them that very minute she come in at the door. An' that same afternoon, m'm, she come into the kitchen w'ile I was a-havin' my tea—no lady would do that, m'm—an' I 'adn't no more than raised the saucer to my lips, m'm, afore she says to me, very 'aughty-like, "Skiffles," she says, "Skiffles, did you see a 'alf a crown lyin' on the drorin'-room table?—It was there w'en you came this mornin', an' now it has went."

Well, m'm, I near drops dead with shock, but I gets up an' I draws myself to my full 'ight—just like I 'ears about in

that lovely book Mr. Skiffles is readin' now, *The H'ashes of Remorse*—'e's quite a scholard, is Mr. Skiffles—'e often reads to me, m'm, after I come 'ome at night tired out, an' I'm scrubbin' the kitchen floor—an' as I gets to me feet accident-like, steps on a bit o' coal as was lyin' under the kitchen table with my bonnet and shawl. I twists my ankle, but I says nothink about it—I draws myself up an' says, "Please, m'm, an' thank you, m'm, an' beggin' your pardon, m'm (I knows my manners, an' I never forgets 'em, no matter 'ow I'm insulted, m'm), "I may or I may not 'ave seen the paltry 'alf a crown you mention, I don't know, as all the ladies I works for never leaves nothink around no smaller than gold soveringks!"

You see it was like this, m'm—W'en

I was dustin' the drorin'-room table I sees wot looks to me like a 'alf a crown. I picks it up and bites it—to see as it's all right—then I dusts it careful and puts it back with the other furniture. Then I opens the winder an' I walks out. You see, wot I think 'appened, m'm, was this. Most likely the draught blows the 'alf a crown out o' the winder—'ow do I know? —and just at that minute, m'm, I sees a little nipper pick up somethin' from under the winder—or near it—an' makes off as fast with it as 'is dear little legs would take 'im, so I says to myself at the time, "Look at the dear little feller, most likely 'e's runnin' off with somebody's 'alf a crown 'e's picked up, bless 'is little 'eart, an' good luck to 'im."—An' they never found 'ide nor 'air of it, neither, m'm.

Believe me, or believe me not, m'm, sometimes my brain is near wore to death with all my troubles! Well, never mind, as they say, "At the Day of Judgment every 'erring must 'ang by its own tail." But wot's goin' to 'appen to Mrs. Brown, I don't know, m'm. In fact, m'm, I don't know wot's comin' over all the wimmen nowadays—they don't know their place no more, nor wot's owin' to their 'usban's. I don't think I've never told you nothing about Mrs. Brown, m'm, she wot lives on top o' us—she'll lose 'im first thing she knows, an' she won't get another, m'm, not with that face, m'm. She treats 'im terrible, m'm—more like a dog than anythin' else. Mr. Brown's all right, 'e is—got a smile an' a 'earty word for every one, 'e 'as. You see, 'e comes

from the North, m'm, an' is a snow-shoveler by trade, m'm — it ain't 'is fault, is it, that we 'ain't 'ad no snow to speak of in London for the past three years? 'Ow can 'e 'elp it? 'E ain't one o' those willings-to-work but won't work.

Well, the other night I comes in from my work, an' there sits Mr. Brown the other side o' the fire with Mr. Skiffles, as comfortable as you please, sharin' Mr. Skiffles' pint o' bitter. Pretty soon Mrs. Brown comes in from *'er* work, an' not findin' Mr. Brown up-stairs, down she comes, an' w'en she finds 'im she's in a towerin' rage. 'Ow does she expect any man's goin' to stand sitting in a cold room all day without a bit o' fire an' not even a drop in the 'ouse to warm 'im with, neither? Well, w'en she finds 'im there, 'appy an' comfortable-like, she

near goes crazy—such langwidge, m'm—she calls 'im everything she could lay 'er 'and to. You see, she 'ad got 'im a little job o' emptyin' dust-bins without askin' 'im if 'e felt like it, an' w'en she told 'im about, 'e said 'e couldn't go because 'e 'ad promised to march with the Unemployed—but that made no difference with 'er. Some wimmen 'ain't got no feelin's.

I near forgot to tell you my sister-in-law's buried 'er mother at last, m'm. They give 'er a proper send off, they did, m'm—an' she made a lovely corpse—black 'orses an' carriages, m'm — with them long bushy tails—'angin' down be-'ind. An' she looked sight more like 'erself than w'en she was alive, m'm. The corpse's other daughter took on terrible, she did, m'm. We 'ad a lovely

time, m'm — Mr. Skiffles 'e was feelin' stronger that day, so 'e come, too. . . . I tried to comfort 'er, m'm, by tellin' 'er not to mind—we 'ad all to go soon, but Lord love you, m'm, it didn't do no good, like water off a duck's back—in one ear an' out the other.

Mrs. Kelly's 'avin' 'er troubles, too, m'm, she is. . . . You don't know Mrs. Kelly, m'm? She's a widow, she is, leastways, she's got a 'usban' but always wears weeds, because you see as 'ow she's able to do more for 'er customers in 'er profeshun—she gets sympathy-like. . . . Oh, she's wot you call a "pawner," m'm —one o' them there women who pawns the 'usban's clothes on a Monday an' takes 'em out on a Sat'day night. She gets a penny a bundle for takin' 'em an' a penny for bringin' 'em back. Well, as

The Eternal Feminine

I stopped into the pub the other night to take 'ome Mr. Skiffles' 'alf an' 'alf, there sits Mrs. Kelly in the private bar lookin' very sad. I says to 'er, "Good evenin', Mrs. Kelly, an' 'opin' you're all right." An' she says, "The same to you, Mrs. Skiffles, an' many of 'em." Then she asks me wot I'll be 'avin'—she knows 'er manners, too, does Mrs. Kelly—an' I says, "The same as you," an' she replies very polite, "So be it." Myself, I loathe the stuff: I only takes it med'cine-like, for my spasms—it gives me the shudders, m'm, w'en I tastes it.

Well, these are Mrs. Kelly's own words, m'm. Says she, "Mrs. Skiffles, you know as 'ow, come winter, come summer, come spring, come autumn, I goes my rounds on a Monday mornin' an' collects all the bundles, an' there ain't nobody can come,

'igh nor low, an' say I don't do all fair an' square by my customers, an' now Mrs. Muggs comes along an' in some under-'anded way finds out my regulars an' offers to do the 'ole job for three 'a' pence instead o' my tuppence, cuttin' the very ground from under my nose." Ain't it terrible, m'm, after she's been an' built up a good business? That's the way with this life, m'm—just when your cup is full to the bursting point, you find it has a silver lining.

. . . Me apron dirty, m'm? No, m'm, that ain't dirt. Sometimes after I've done down the stairs or swept up the 'earth, I wipes my 'ands on my apron—But dirt, m'm? No, m'm, beggin' your pardon an' thankin' you.

. . . That's the third time you've coughed, m'm, since I come in. I don't

like the color you got now, neither—It's more like wot you call a 'ectic flush than anythin' 'uman. . . . Got any pain in your chest? . . . No? It comes that way sometimes, m'm, an' you don't know nothink at all about it. My sister, m'm, w'en 'er young man was runnin' after 'er, she was on the road with gallopin' consumption, an' we never knew it—an' 'im a 'orse trainer, too, m'm. It begun just like that, m'm, with a cough we took no notice of—started in 'er bronical tubes, m'm, and afore we knowed nothink she ups and dies, m'm, an' . . .

. . . Wot, m'm? . . . Your tea, m'm? Well, I thought I 'eard you say somethin' like that a w'ile ago w'en I was gassin' on. It won't take but a moment, m'm, an' I'll tell you all about 'er fune'ral w'en I come back.

THE END

BOB

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